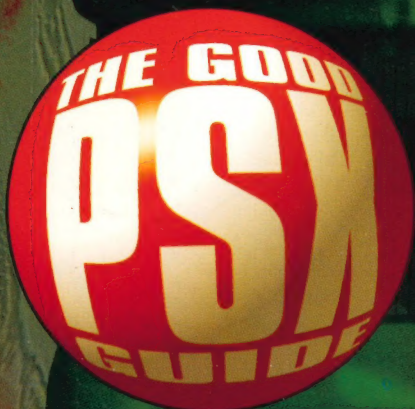


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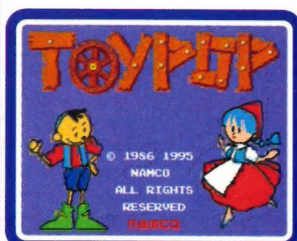
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COVER STORY

14 RESIDENT EVIL

Creating an atmosphere in a game is a very difficult thing to do. *Doom* is one of the most atmospheric games to grace the PlayStation, but prepare to meet a game that makes *Doom*'s cacodemons and horned beasts look like a Melvyn Hayes appreciation society.



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Despite its status as a relative newcomer to the console scene, the PlayStation is backed up with an incredible selection of peripherals and spin-off memorabilia. *PlayStation Plus* does its duty and with Christmas mere days away we guide you through the mire of joypads, music CDs and available software after your cash.

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG KITTY: 104

EA's *Wing Commander III* is the most expensive FMV game to date. As it prepares to dock with the Sony's wonder machine and pulls in for the preview treatment, *PlayStation Plus* asks the question anyone familiar with the FMV wants to know: full motion video — shite or what?

PREVIEWS

Virgin's recently-acquired *Street Fighter Alpha* paves the way, with Konami's answer to *Total NBA* — *NBA In the Zone* — blowing us all away with its stunning aesthetics and incredible playability. Footy fans are also well catered for as SIE unveil the latest version of *Adidas Power Soccer*.

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Core Design are the first company to mix arcade playability with a flight simulator, and as such *Firestorm: Thunderhawk II* fronts our reviews. Sadly, *Descent* is the second best thing we have to offer in what has turned out to be a relatively crap month for PlayStation games. Next month, however, promises great things...

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NEWS

JANUARY RELEASES

Something old, something new, something borrowed...

MICKEY MANIA

Conversion from the rather playable Super NES original. See news story for further details.

PHILOSOMA

Rather average hybrid of horizontal and 3D scrolling shoot 'em up sections. Available on import for some time now, and already looking a little tired.

ASSAULT RIGS

Yes, again. SIE's classy variant on the old VCS classic, *Combat*, has suffered a delay, but should now appear midway through January. Awarded 81% in *PSP2*.

TWISTED METAL

Playable but limited racing game. Sony give the player the chance to chase other vehicles through suburbia and blow the shite out of them with an array of weaponry. Awarded 82% in *PSP3*.



STARBLADE ALPHA

Another victim of slippage, Namco's perfect conversion of their less than perfect coin-op is finally due to hit these shores in January. An enhanced version is also included on the CD, with fancy shading and light effects.



THE SIDE ELEVATION OF AN ALIEN WARRIOR. THE LIGHT SOURCING IS PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE AND REACTS TO THE DIFFERENT IN-GAME ILLUMINATION.

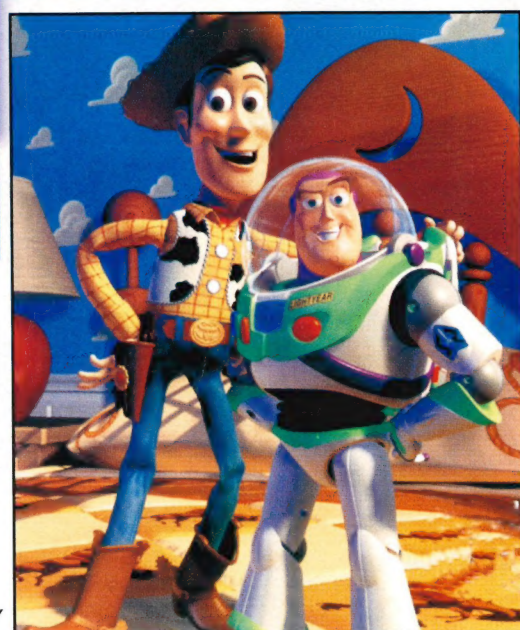


THE ALIEN QUEEN — COMPLETE WITH EXTENDING PISTON JAWS. THE LARGEST SPRITE IN ALIEN TRILOGY.

TOY STORY

Having recently knocked *GoldenEye* from the top of the US cinema charts, *Toy Story* is preparing for the leap to the PlayStation — with Disney's new software arm at the helm. Set in a world where toys are living, breathing creatures, *Toy Story* tells of a war between playthings in a child's toyroom. The film details the time between the kid's birthday and Christmas, and the angst felt by the toys as they wonder if they are set to be replaced by the new batch. The main rivalry is between a cowboy called Woody (voiced by Tom Hanks) and an astronaut, Buzz,

who doesn't realise he's a toy (the voice of Tim Allen). The story revolves around their ongoing feud. The difference between *Toy Story* and past Disney efforts is that everything in *Toy Story* is computer-rendered, with the toys all developed on SGI workstations. The 16bit versions are platform affairs, but we are told that the PlayStation game will look a lot closer to the film with larger



sprites and spot-on backdrop recreations. No sign of a release date, as, at the time of writing, nobody has signed it up. Expect Virgin or Sony to be the main contenders, though.

ALIEN TRILOGY:

FIRST MOTION-CAPTURE SHOTS



NEWS



Following Issue 2's exclusive shots of Acclaim's forthcoming *Alien Trilogy*, we can now unveil the first motion-capture sprites to be incorporated into the final game. A joint production between Probe (who Acclaim recently bought in-house for a huge fee) and Acclaim US's division, Probe are handling the 3D routines for the game itself, with the US division using blue screen projection techniques to recreate the creature's movement as faithfully as possible.

In the version of the game used in our feature, the sprites detailing the aliens, company reps and rogue marines were rough positionals while Acclaim awaited the results of the motion-capture tests. Now, however, the finished sprites are ready for inclusion, with Probe taking delivery of a full set of alien warriors, marines and – best of all – a bloody huge alien Queen, who will form the final obstacle in the game. Acclaim's motion capture technique has only been used twice before in commercially release titles (*Batman Forever* and *Big Hurt Baseball* for the Super NES), but *Alien Trilogy* has proved a lot more complex than either.

Motion detectors are positioned on key parts of the body (and tail!) of an actor wearing a recreated alien suit, and the information from these is recorded on a series of SGI workstations. As the actor goes through the motions – in this case, running, scrabbling across the floor/ceiling, and lunging towards the player – the key points are linked together as a wireframe skeleton. With this as the sprite basis, the skeleton is then supplemented with a fuller, physiologically-correct outline of the alien which is in turn rendered to recreate the final beast.

As can be expected, the process is very long-winded indeed, but the final results promise a game where the player can freely blast away at creatures in a manner akin to the action in James Cameron's *Aliens*. Cool.



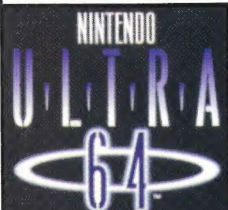
PLAYSTATION TO TOP 80,000 BY CHRISTMAS

By the time Christmas is over, Sony will have 80,000 PlayStations in UK homes – with a pan-European sale of 130,000! This means Sony are well on their April target of 180,000 machines across Europe, and they have also gathered more than \$34m in sales of software, hardware and peripherals worldwide. And just to add insult to the likes of the Saturn, 3DO and Jaguar, sales reports indicate the PlayStation is outselling key rivals between a 3:1 and a massive 11:1 ratio!



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SIM HOSPITAL

Flush with the success of PlayStation *Theme Park* (one of the few UK-developed games to go down a bomb with Japanese users), Bullfrog have confirmed a follow-up of sorts for the Sony machine. *Theme Hospital* transports the same easy to use icon system to a medical scenario, with the player given full control over every aspect of the building. Having established the building, everything from creating the rooms to finding the staff falls at the player's feet — with promises of malpractice lawsuits galore! The PC version of the game is the most advanced so far, but a PlayStation port should find itself on the shelves in the latter half of 1996. No doubt, a certain Ms Bottomley wished they'd released it a year or so ago...

CROW II : CITY OF ANGELS

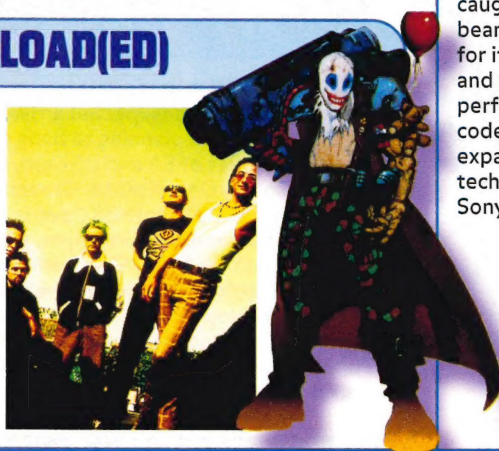
Aclaim's seemingly ever-lasting supply of film licences has been topped up with the acquisition of *The Crow: City of Angels* to their ranks. The sequel to Brandon Lee's superb original, *Crow II* recasts the central dark avenger in the guise of Vincent Perez, who is brought back to life to avenge his death — as in the first film. As with all their recent licences, Acclaim have been given

the run of the film set and are supplying a number of SGI effects for use in the film. Other members of the cast are yet to be decided, and shooting begins in March next year, with both the film and game due to appear for Christmas '96.



GREMLIN RELOAD(ED)

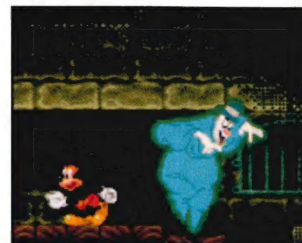
Gremlin have confirmed a follow-up to *Loaded* (rated 75% in PSP2). The title — *Reloaded* — is about the only thing confirmed regarding the sequel as of yet, with the same development team currently planning storyboards and game ideas. Indy band, Pop Will Eat Itself, who performed some of the musical chores for *Loaded* for Gremlin are said to be interested in supplying music for the sequel. Two PWEI tracks — *RSVP* and *Kick to Kill* — grace *Loaded*, but whether the sequel will use other tracks lifted from their album or all-new material is unknown.



MICKEY MANIA

A shock addition to Sony's January release schedule is a conversion of their Super NES and Megadrive hit, *Mickey Mania*. Starring Disney's pensionable mouse, *Mickey Mania* is a multi-stage platformer charting Mickey's progression from black and white cartoons into the realm of colour and *Fantasia*.

Developers SIE have lifted key sequences from the most famous Mickey Mouse cartoons, with our intrepid hero going on a moose-hunt, getting caught up in a tornado and climbing a huge beanstalk. *Mickey Mania* was steeped in praise for its 16bit incarnation and recreates the look and feel of the cartoon episodes it is based on perfectly. According to Sony the PlayStation code retains the fifteen levels of the original, but expands upon the 3D stages using the enhanced technology of the Sony machine.



PLAYSTATION SAMPRAS

Codemasters have beefed up their PlayStation schedule with the addition of a PlayStation version of *Pete Sampras Tennis* — provisionally-

entitled *Sampras Extreme* — for the Sony machine. A massive success on the Megadrive (and now in its second incarnation), PlayStation *Sampras* is going to feature motion-capture

sequences for realistic animation (although it isn't known if the curly-haired meister himself is the subject), and Codemasters are planning to put the emphasis on playability rather than on multiple views and OTT presentation. They are, however, promising a full selection of

shots, with the four face buttons effecting lobs, backhands, and slices to order. Sony *Sampras* should be here for next year's Wimbledon tournament.



CLAYFIGHTER

Interplay's *Clayfighters* is being prepared for a PlayStation release for sometime next year. Having appeared on the Super NES and Megadrive and spawned a sequel, the Sony version is said to feature the best of both games with a huge cast of clay characters and special moves. The original Super NES code fea-

tured some of the best graphics seen on the system, with the likes of Mr Frosty and Helga digitised from stop-motion puppets and dropped into the traditional side-on view — à la *Street Fighter*. The 16bit versions were criticised for their lack of speed, but it is hoped the PlayStation's enhanced capabilities will eradicate any such problems.

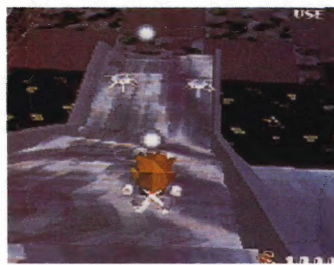
FLOATING FLASH?

MARVEL SUPER HEROES

Following on from their success with *X-Men*, Capcom's *Marvel Super Heroes* coin-op is just starting to appear in arcades now, and the good news is that it'll be landing on planet PlayStation at some point in the future. A one-on-one fighting game, *MSH* features some of your all-time favourites, including The Hulk, Wolverine, Spider-Man, Magneto, Juggernaut, Iron Man, Psylocke, and Captain America. In case you're a comic-head, they're being brought together as a part of the *Infinity Gauntlet* crossover series — not that you need an excuse to play an excellent beat 'em up with your favourites in!



Jumping Flash was one of the first PlayStation games we saw, and pretty damn impressive it was too. Apart from being a compulsive game to play, it also featured an excellent graphical style and an interesting control system. Well, if that was your cup of tea, you might want to keep your eyes open for a new Japanese game currently on the go called *Floating Runner*. Looking very similar to *Jumping Flash* (only without any surreal rabbits and carrots) *Floating Runner* appears to share a similar look and feel, while playing more like a traditional platform game. We'll keep you informed as we learn more.



ZERO DIVIDE

Good news for anyone who fancied the look of the weird import beat 'em up *Zero Divide* (reviewed in Issue One — 72 percent) as Ocean confirm that they've picked up the game, with a February release looking likely for the UK version. Metallic creations ahoy, as you get to fight it out with eight strange-looking fighters, each capable of the usual hits, throws, and finishing moves. It's also damn good news for anyone who didn't fancy the prospect of shelling out seventy quid for the bugger!



SCOTTISH OPEN

The Sony golfing greens are getting cluttered, with the unexpected arrival of Core Design who are planning to bang shoulders with the likes of EA and US Gold, as they unveil their *Scottish Open* licence. Converted from the existing PC and 32X, *Scottish Open* is based on the famed courses of said tournament, with Core following the path set by US Gold with fly-by shot previews and digitised backdrops. Similarly, the Derby-based developer promises a full set of clubs and shot techniques as they attempt to lift the PlayStation equivalent of the Ryder Cup. A review follows next month.





SOLAR ECLIPSE

More 3D shenanigans on their way, as BMG confirm that the sequel to *Total Eclipse* – *Solar Eclipse* – will appear on the PlayStation. Previewed in Issue One (try and get hold of one of those if you can!) *Total Eclipse* was very much of the 'old school', with *Space Harrier*-esque gameplay throughout, and good old fashion blasting mayhem all round. *Solar Eclipse* promises more of the same, only this time, cleverly prefixed with the word 'Solar'.



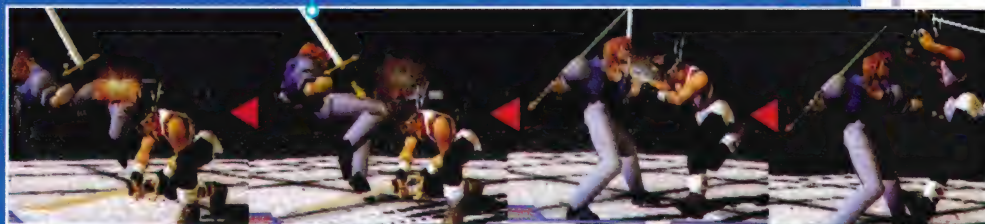
TOH SHIN DEN 2

Ellis, Sofia, Eiji, Duke, and all your *Battle Arena Toshinden* favourites are back again, ready to take part in the imaginatively titled *Toh Shin Den 2*. Featuring enhanced graphics and a plethora of game play tweaks, *T2* looks sexier than ever, making use of new rendered intros and Manga-like portraits as it prepares to take on the likes of *Zero Divide* [see other news story] and *Tekken 2*. A complete version exists in Japan (*Toh Shin Den 5*) complete with hidden characters, but whether it'll hold up against all likes of forthcoming *X-Men* and *Street Fighter Alpha* releases remains to be seen.



THE SEQUEL'S GRAPHICS FAR SURPASS THOSE OF THE ORIGINAL.

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MORTALLY WOUNDED

Accclaim's plans for a PlayStation version of *Mortal Kombat II* have been canned. The reasons for the cancellation of the project are not officially known, but it doesn't take that bright a spark to work out that the release of

Sony's own *MKIII* could have something to do with it. For *MKII* to have been a viable proposition it would have had to have been a budget title, and the work that goes into such a port — and licensing fees to Midway — wouldn't have made it financially feasible. A pity, as the early code we saw looked rather smart, although its ironic that *MKII* is a victim of the ultimate Fatality...



PLAYSTATION PLUS

RECOMMENDS

The best of the recently-released PlayStation titles:

WORMS

The most played game in the PSP office. *Worms* is a supreme mixture of strategy and arcade playability. It excels on a number of levels, with the randomly-generated stages throwing up a seemingly infinite number of challenges. The ultimate multi-player game, and while it hardly pushes the PlayStation it is destined to be played for years and years to come.



DOOM

The greatest version of what some regard as the ultimate video game. Williams have taken the best levels from *Doom*, *Doom II*, and *Ultimate Doom* and added light-sourcing effects to create a stunningly claustrophobic game. The original blasting action is as fast and frenetic as ever, and add to this a haunting soundtrack and you have a contender for game of the year.



TEKKEN

Namco's beat 'em up is a tad slow in its PAL incarnation, but it still mops the floor with Sega's *Virtua* gang. More hidden moves than Casanova, and graphics which remind you of why you bought a PlayStation. Even when completed, *Tekken* holds enough surprises for repeat viewings.



COMPETITION WINNERS

Listed below are the winners of the competitions run up to Issue 2 of PSP. Your names have been forwarded to the companies responsible, so please do not call us regarding prize delivery. Ta.

Prelaunch Issue: "Beyond Vision" competition for copies of *Soylent Green*, *The Omega Man*, *The Illustrated Man*, and *Outland* videos.

Winners: Gary Sharp, Banff. Ron Carruthers, Edinburgh. Pete Sharpe, Leicester. Graham Carver, Liverpool. Laura Shields, Lincoln.

Issue One: "Beyond Vision" competition for copies of *Logan's Run*, *The Outer Limits*, and *Babylon 5* videos.

Winners: Leigh Harman, East Sussex. Pete Wright, Poole. Adrian Hookinson, Cheshire. David Clegg, Dewsbury. Michael Morrow, Manchester.

Issue One: "Street Fighter Manga" competition for copies of *Street Fighter Animated* movie.

Winners: Michael Cameron, Dundee. Stuart Duncan, Aberdeenshire. Mr K Dean, Devon. Conway Shawn, Reading. Mr S Boulden, Romney Marsh. Andrew Flanagan, NW1. P Wong, Birmingham. Chris Byrne, Northampton. Scott Gregory, Ayrshire. David Clegg, Dewsbury.

Issue Two: "Titan Books" competition for *Alien* book set.

Winners: Tony Robins, Watford. Tom Dillinger, Edgeware. Peter Wright, Poole. Marc Scott, Radlett. Greig Keenan, East Lothian.

Issue Two: "Beyond Vision" competition for copies of *Highlander*, *1,000,000 Years BC*, *Salem's Lot*, and *The Outer Limits* videos.

Winners: Steven Sinclair, Fife. Miss F J Roberts, Nottingham. Gary Cummings, Sunderland. Andrew Sweetman, East Sussex. A Casey, Lancs.

WIN! WORMS STUFF

With *Worms* firmly established in the PSP offices as the game for lunchtime activities, Team 17 are offering five readers the chance to win limited edition T-shirts and hats — both sporting a Worm on the front. To win one of these, just answer the following question and... well, you know the rest. Mark your entries, **WORMS COMPETITION:** Which of the following is not a Worms weapon:

- A. Laser
- B. Sheep
- C. Banana



WIN! MYST GOODIES!

Thanks to our best mates at Sony Interactive Entertainment, we've got three memory cards and three *Myst* tip books to give away — and you could be that very lucky reader! We'll be reviewing *Myst* in next month's issue, and once you've gone out and bought the thing, you'll be glad you entered our compo because the chances of you playing it without getting stuck are lower than something very very low indeed.

Anyway, to stand a chance of winning, just answer this simple question and send in your entries

on the back of a postcard to: *Myst* Compo, PlayStation Plus, EMAP Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Usual rules apply. And the question is: Under what name were Sony Interactive Entertainment previously known? Hmm.



WIN! RED DWARF VIDEOS

Fans of *Red Dwarf* will no doubt be cock-a-hoop that BBC Video have released a second out-takes video — entitled *Smeg Outs*. It features cock-ups and behind-the-scenes mistakes from the first three series of the science-fiction spoof, and we've got five copies to give away thanks to our mates at the Beeb. To win one of the five, just answer the following question and send your answer to the usual address marked **RED DWARF COMPETITION:**

Who plays Dave Lister in *Red Dwarf*?

- A. Danny John-Jules
 - B. Chris Barrie
 - C. Craig Charles
- Normal rules apply.



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I GOT

CHILLS...



FEAR: noun.

1. An unpleasant emotion caused by the nearness of danger or expectation of pain, etc.

2. Reverence or awe. 3. a danger, a likelihood

verb. 1. Feel fear of, be afraid. 2. Show reverence towards.

3. To have an uneasy feeling...



We all have something we're scared of. Whether it be the dark, fire, drowning, or disease — and this is partly the reason we like to watch horror films. They allow us to distance ourselves from our personal demons, so while you may indeed enter brown trouser territory if introduced to a bloody great Tarantula, it's still great to watch some poor sod get smothered in them on the big screen.

But enough of this philosophical bollocks.

In a brilliant twist on the arcade/adventure theme, Capcom's *Resident Evil* is the closest the PlayStation is ever likely to come to recreating the schlock atmosphere of a horror film. It has everything Hammer and the more recent splatter films have used to make people jump. Dimly-lit corridors play host to the undead, mad scientists perform unearthly experiments, traps and switches uncover new ways to die, and oversized insects and unusually vicious everyday animals see us as prey. Basically, *Resident Evil* is like *Them!* meets *The House That Dripped Blood* meets *Frankenstein*. Cool.

With some seeing the way forward for video games being the FMV route, Capcom have created their own tribute to the B-movie but, unlike past FMV horror stories (the heavily-criticised *Night Trap*, for example), *Resident Evil* is every bit as playable as it is sumptuous to look at. We're not known for getting that enthusiastic over too many titles, but *Resident Evil*'s superb atmosphere and stunning appearance, have got us chomping at more bits than a zombie at an 'eat all you like for a fiver' party. Join us in the realm of the undead.





RESIDENT

RELEASE MARCH
PRICE TBA
BY VIRGIN
PLAYERS 1
GENRE ARCADE / ADVENTURE

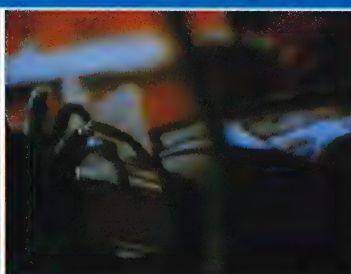


Temporarily abandoning the one-on-one beat 'em ups which rapidly established them as the premiere fighting game developer, Capcom are exploring the basis of fear in an arcade/adventure drawing dark ideas from common-held phobias and nightmares. With *Darkstalkers* and *Street Fighter Alpha* ready to take on the mighty *Mortal Kombat III*, Capcom are now going for the throat of games like *Alone in the Dark*, with a title which is just so impressive it's unbelievable. Ordinarily, we tend to keep opinions out of pre-views, but seeing *Resident Evil* in action makes it hard to sit on the fence. From the moment the three characters begin the game in the house's lobby and a blood-curdling scream is heard from the left wing, *Resident Evil* begins pulling the player into the mysteries the house contains. Add to this nightmarish foes from countless horror films and nightmares, and you have an arcade/adventure Virgin have every right to be proud of distributing.

The development team have opted for the B-movie scenario of a haunted house on a hill, containing a series of grotesque genetic mutations and experiments which are shielding a deadly secret within the building's many corridors and rooms. Searching for clues to solve this Scooby Dooesque mystery, however, leads to confrontations from hideous flesh-eating zombies, oversized lizard men and snakes large enough to swallow a six-foot person without breaking a reptilian sweat. It's the stuff nightmares are made of, its exclusive to the PlayStation, and it'll be out in March. Be afraid, be very afraid...

PHOBIA 1: SPIDERS

An otherwise shite film, Amblin's *Arachnophobia* is made worthwhile by the final spider attack. After pitting sufferer Jeff Daniels against thousands of eight-legged buggers, he finally faces off against a huge mother creature. The fear in his eyes as the huge bast' climbs up his chest sent a shiver down a thousand similarly-afflicted peoples' backs.



THE ATTENTION TO DETAIL EVEN SHOWS BLOOD FROM THE ZOMBIE SOAKING INTO THE CARPETS!

WHAT'S THE STORY (WARNING: GORY)

Resident Evil is an arcade/adventure, set in 3D and using the same varied 'camera' views pioneered by Infogrames' *Alone in the Dark* series. Opting to control either Chris Redfield or Jill Valentine, a pair of male and female investigative agents, Capcom have created a house full of bizarre experiments and mutations, behind which lurks an even deadlier secret. According to the minimal reconnaissance notes the scenario provides, the secluded mansion was a government establishment used for genetic manipulation. The ultimate aim of the work is shielded in secrecy, but contact with the scientists within has been lost and the authorities are jittery that something has obviously gone awry, and their precious work is set to jeopardise the lives of people in the area.

Desperate to keep something under wraps or eradicated before it escapes the confines of the mansion, your mission is to eliminate everything within the house and determine just what has gone wrong...

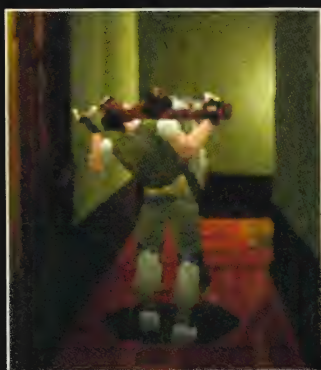


THE BRILLIANT SPIDER EXPLODES, UNLEASHING DOZENS OF BABIES.

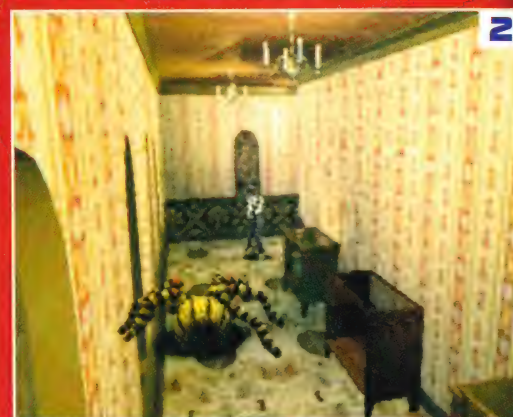


OH, WHAT AN ATMOSPHERE...

Comparisons to Infogrames' *Alone in the Dark* are inevitable, as both games share the differing camera views across their 3D locations, but where *Resident Evil* really impresses is in the atmosphere its narrow corridors and spartan rooms offers. It's difficult pinpointing why *Resident Evil* gives out a feeling of imminent danger and anticipation, but believe us when we say it does. The sprawling house plays host to many strange experiments, and a lot of the shocks are provided just as you think you've found an uninhabited part of the building. A keen eye is also needed as certain death can often be seen hiding around a corner, with a few minor sound effects giving a clue as to what it could be — a tortured groan, for example, heralds the arrival of a flesh-eating zombie. By far the most impressive sequence we've seen so far, though, deals with the age-old fear of spiders. As the player's chosen investigator rounds a corner, a shadow can be seen on the ceiling around the next corridor. Suddenly, the shadow shrinks as the object drops to the floor, revealing itself to be a huge yellow and black spider. Rearing up on its hind legs as it attacks, the game cameras switch to give an improved view, and only repeated blasts with your gun (or shotgun, for greater effect) impede the arachnid's progress. More blasts then either tip the spider on its back where it struggles until finished off, or a larger calibre weapon blows it to bits, unleashing a horde of baby spiders from its now empty egg-sac. Yuk.

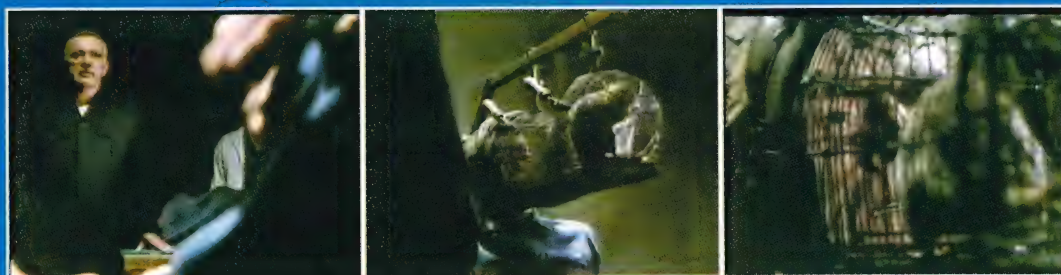


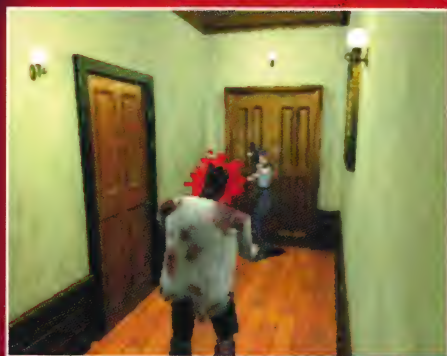
IF DISTANT SHOTS FAIL, PUT THE GUN IN THEIR MOUTH.



PHOBIA 2: RATS

Before Nick Hancock pinched the idea for BBC2, Room 101 was the domain where George Orwell's inquisitor, O'Brien, exposed 'unruly elements' to their worst fears. With Richard Burton playing the evil interrogator, and John Hurt as his victim, Winston Smith, Smith's fear of rats is cruelly exposed as a cage of rats (his greatest fear) is attached to his face.





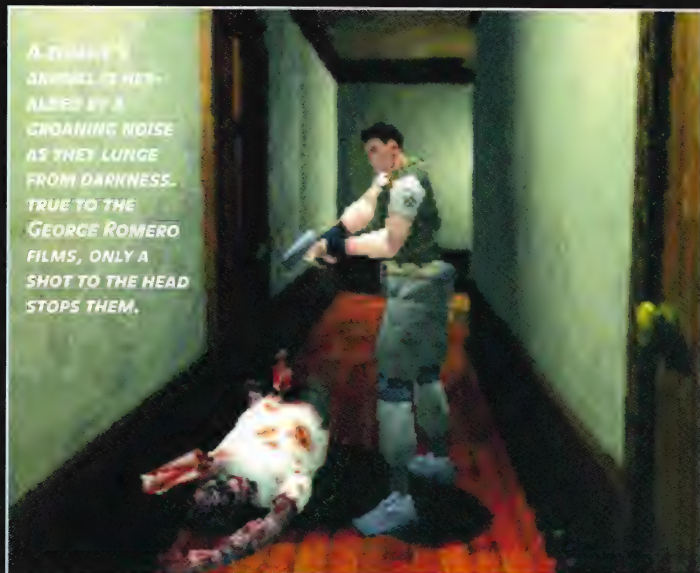
BLOWN AWAY

Initially, your brave investigator is armed with a pistol, a number of rounds of ammo, and a bloody great Bowie knife. However, dotted around the house are more powerful weapons including a revolver (great for reducing that spider to a pile of mush), a shotgun (put it in a zombie's gob and watch their head detonate!) and — in true *Evil Dead* style — a chainsaw. One of the greatest things about *Resident Evil* is the way the action free falls; for example, if you wound a zombie with your pistol and they stumble to the floor, you can then either finish them with the knife or invert their brain pan with the shotgun! As expected, Virgin are expecting to run into problems with the game's high gore content (the attention to detail even shows the blood soaking into the carpets!), and are currently looking at ways to keep the blood in, with one possibility being a code which allows the player access to the gruesome bits.



IN CONTROL

Negotiating the rooms is managed using a strange but effective rotational system. Left and right movements on the Dpad swivel the character on his or her axis, and combination of this and down or up movements prompt them to walk in the required direction. Accessing their weapons is then a matter of pressing the Start button to open the inventory, before selecting the object needed. Similarly, examining items involves simply walking up to them, whereby the screen cuts to a close-up view. Two presses of the X button then calls the object into play, with the character standing still as a bead is drawn using the Dpad again. The control system mixes elements of *Fade to Black* with more obvious lifts from *Alone in the Dark*, but the speed of the action lends itself to comparisons to *Doom* and its many clones.



A THREAT'S
ANNOUNCEMENT
ALERT BY A
GROWLING NOISE
AS THEY LUNGE
FROM DARKNESS.
TRUE TO THE
GEORGE ROMERO
FILMS, ONLY A
SHOT TO THE HEAD
STOPS THEM.



HITCHCOCK'S THE BIRDS
HAVE NOTHING ON
RESIDENT EVIL'S FEATH-
ERED FIENDS.



THE CAMERA VIEWS
SWITCH TO OFFER MAXI-
MUM DYNAMIC EFFECT.

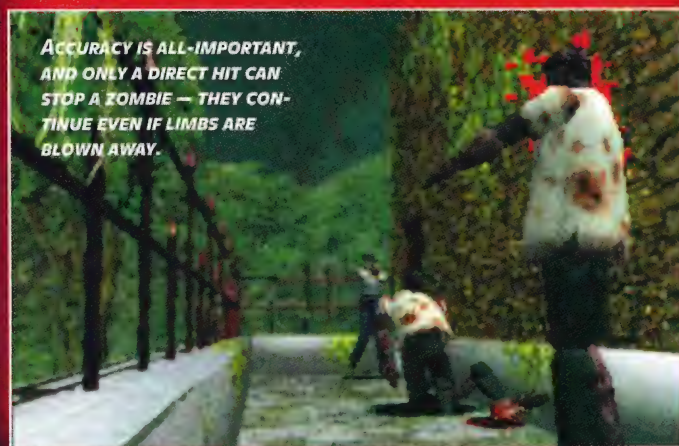
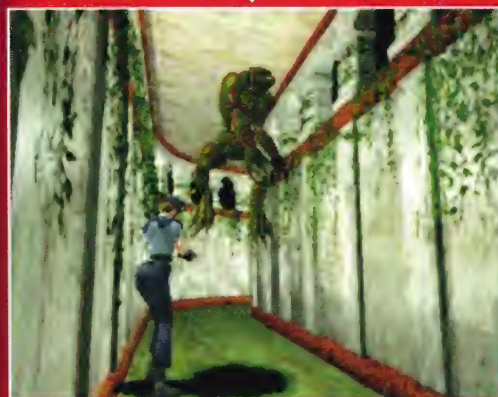
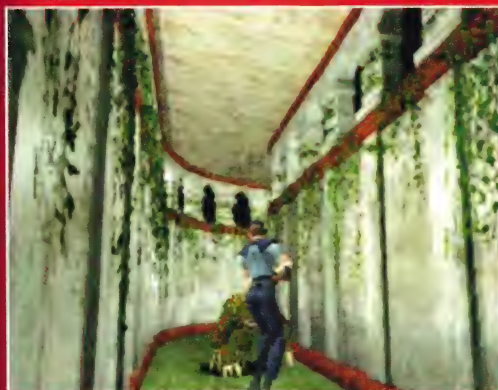
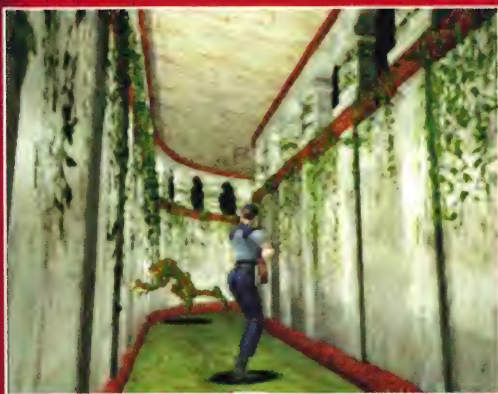
PHOBIA 3: INSECTS

With Indy and Short Round otherwise indisposed in a collapsing room, his female partner, Willy, scoots off to find a way out. Removing a plug in the wall, she places her hand in the hole and grabs what she thinks is a large key. Turning her hand, a huge locust is revealed, with countless more even more repulsive insects just fingertips away...



MONSTER MASH

Whatever they were concocting within the mansion's many labs is unsure, but the side-effects don't indicate anything to make your whites whiter or digest food stains. No sooner have you wandered off to investigate a scream from one of your team, than a zombie lurches around the corner in true B-movie 'arms outstretched' mode. Get too close, and it sinks its teeth into your shoulder with a very satisfying crunch — and this is but the start! Later encounters are with a flock of birds which soar down to peck out your eyes, a lizard king (not Jim Morrison) who seems impervious to bullets, and a bloody great snake which bursts out of the floor. Not everything you meet should be killed, though — there are times when using discretion to avoid a confrontation is the safest route.



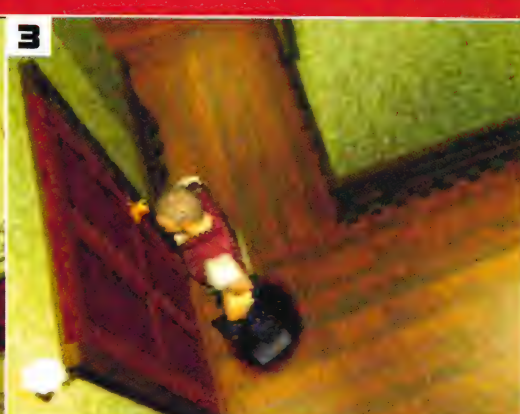
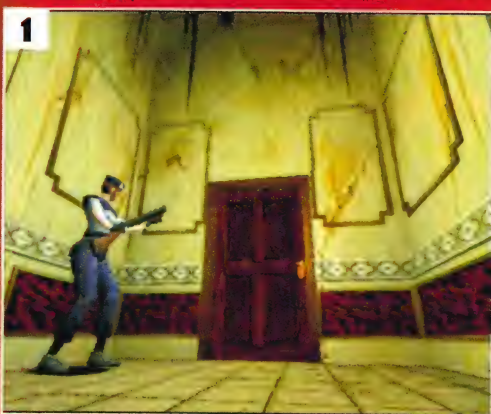
ACCURACY IS ALL-IMPORTANT, AND ONLY A DIRECT HIT CAN STOP A ZOMBIE — THEY CONTINUE EVEN IF LIMBS ARE BLOWN AWAY.



PHOBIA 4: BIRDS

By far the best of the trilogy, *Omen II* features a bird attack to rival Hitchcock's. Our victim is driving, having warned Damien's stepfather of his satanic parent, but the car stalls. As she gets out, a large raven appears, and proceeds to chase her — pecking her eyes out as she runs. To add insult to injury, the now-blinded victim stumbles right in front of a lorry.





THE GREAT ESCAPE

The unfolding story is supplemented via intermission scenes at key points during the game. Not only do these detail new plot twists as told by your character's elusive co-investigator, but add elements of tension to the mission. A perfect example of this is on collecting the shotgun. On exploring a seemingly harmless room, the far wall reveals the said weapon attached to a wall bracket. Taking the gun activates a switch, however, and, on leaving the room, you find both doors have locked themselves and the ceiling is getting lower. As certain death seems imminent, it is essential the player finds a way to gain the other's attention, at which point the door is kicked open and your mate drags you out of the room before the ceiling slams down.



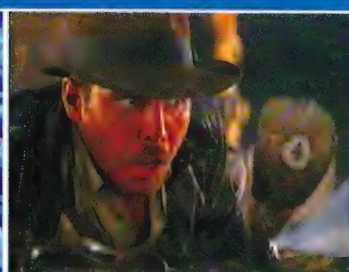
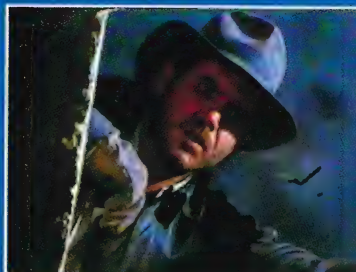
THE PLOT IS UNVEILED AS DYING CHARACTERS GASP OUT A FEW CLUES BEFORE SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL.

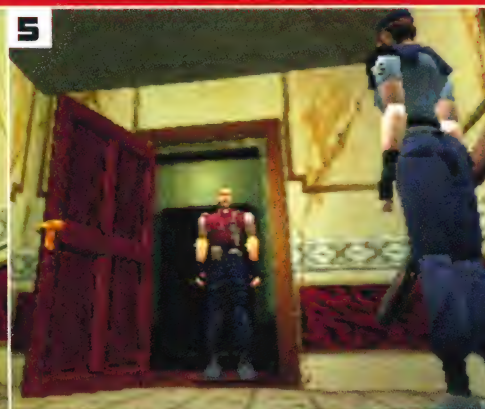
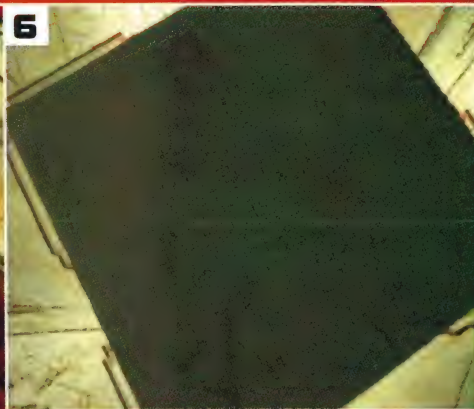
OPENING DOORS IS A MATTER OF FACING THEM AND PRESSING THE X BUTTON.



PHOBIA 5: SNAKES

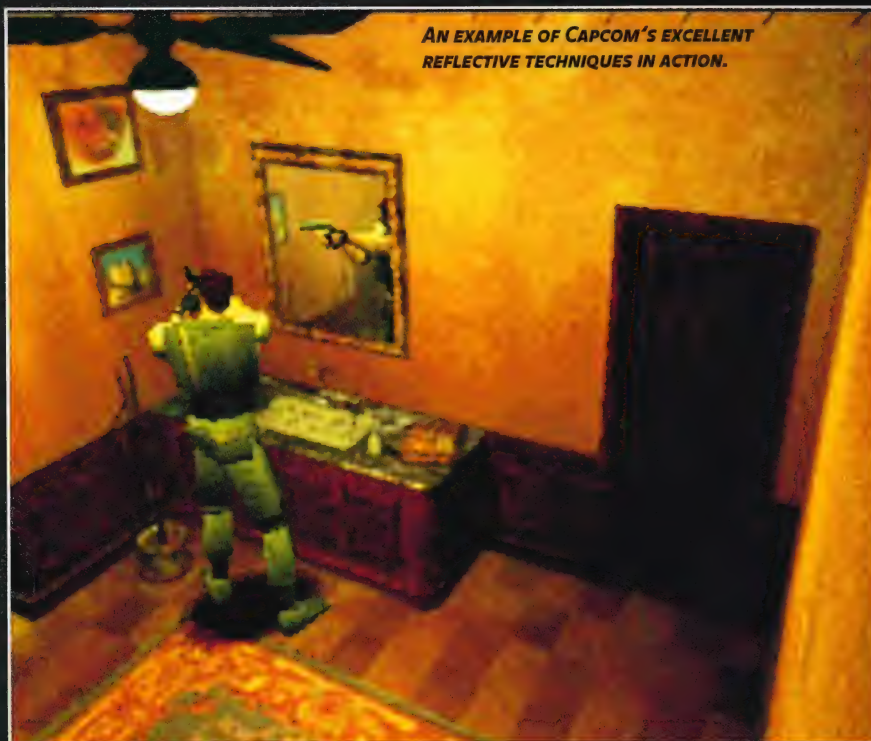
Another Indy classic. Having found the pit containing the Covenant, Indy reveals his fear of snakes as it sinks in why the floor below seems to be moving — "why did it have to be snakes?" groans the intrepid explorer. Swinging in to retrieve the object before the Nazi hordes get to it, he loses his grip and lands bang in the middle, facing a huge rearing Cobra.





ROOMS WITH A VIEW

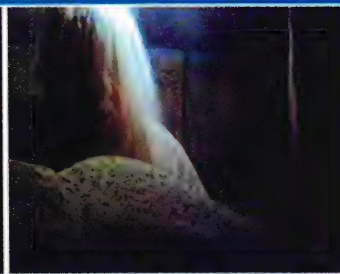
One of the areas of *Resident Evil* Capcom are most proud of are its stunning aesthetics. The mansion is made of the usual bedrooms, hallways and dining areas, but the graphic artists have really gone to town in creating art studios, a piano bar, and a veranda (complete with dead buddy!). The attention to detail is absolutely stunning with little touches enhancing the doom-laden atmosphere throughout. As you near a zombie, for example, keep an eye out for blood smeared up the walls, while one of the rooms contains a mirror – complete with perfect reflections. FMV? Bah! Who needs it!



AN EXAMPLE OF CAPCOM'S EXCELLENT REFLECTIVE TECHNIQUES IN ACTION.

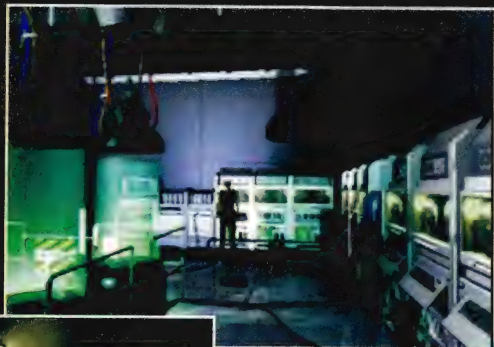
PHOBIA 6: LIVE BURIAL

Another do-gooder falls foul of Damien in another *Omen II* classic. Leo McKern, having found inscriptions detailing Satan's new-found life in young Damien Thorne, is showing his discovery to a journalist friend. As Old Nick gets wind, the room starts shaking, and the pair are blocked in by a rock fall. Mere seconds after, sand pours in the room, burying the two.



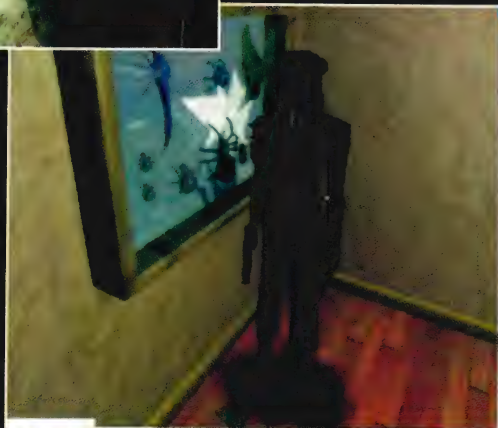
IT HAPPENED ONE DARK NIGHT...

Capcom have really pushed the boat out to add to *Resident Evil*'s creepy atmosphere, and before the player gains control of their character in the house's lobby, a monochromatic introductory sequence sets the scene. Filmed by a Capcom crew, American actors have been used to recreate the team, and the intro shows them padding towards the house obviously on their guard. Via intercut scenes, the viewer is shown they are being watched by a reptilian creature, and as they pick their way through the encroaching mist, it draws steadily nearer. All of a sudden, the guy covering the rear is picked off and savaged by the snarling creature, with the others turning round to blow gory chunks out of it. All this is shown in extreme close-up, with gouts of blood originally pouring out of the monster, and one of the heroes finding a gun in the grass – with their dead comrade's hand still attached! After more chaos and bloodletting, the intro ends with the three in-game characters scrambling towards the house as the monster feasts on their mates.



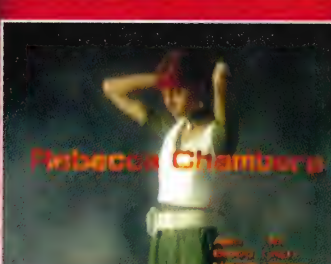
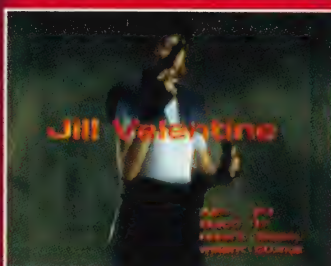
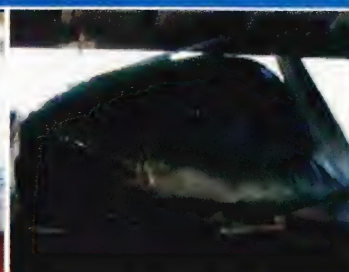
THOSE HATCHING TANKS
LOOK A LITTLE OMINOUS.

DOES THE COLLECTION
OF INSECTS HIDE A SECRET?



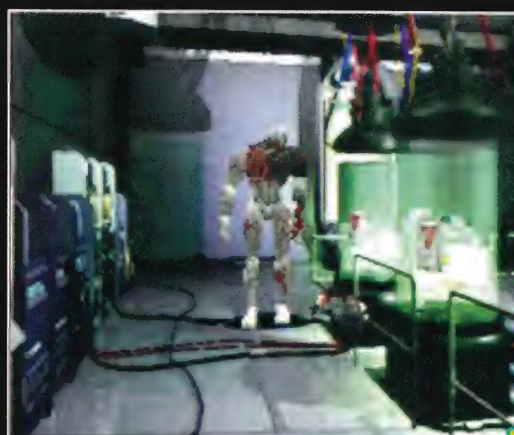
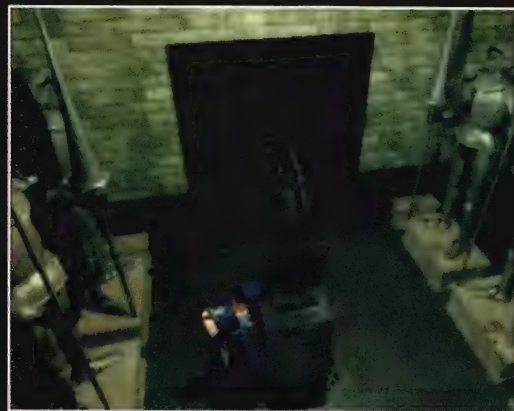
JAWS

Jaws' Chief Brody finds himself on a boat hunting the biggest shark you've ever seen! The boat is rammed by said bloody great fish. Water begins to pour into the stricken boat with Brody paralysed by fear. Quint is munched by the shark, and Brody literally finds himself between two of man's greatest fears.



DON'T YOU KNOW THAT IT'S DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS

In order to add a little extra to the game, the monsters encountered differ between the two available characters. Jill Valentine, for example, faces the huge spider (as seen previously) when wandering through the corridors, while her male partner is wandering along, only for two huge hounds to burst through the window and chase him along the hall. Other plot differences include a room where sharks appear from an experimental tank, and a bloody great plant monster reminiscent of something out of *Doctor Who*.



THE HUGE ROBOT PROVES TO BE ONE OF THE GAME'S
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MOVE FOR
PLAYSTATION'S
MORTAL
KOMBAT 3.**

**DOWN,
DOWN,
FLUSH.**



S.A.P.S.

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION

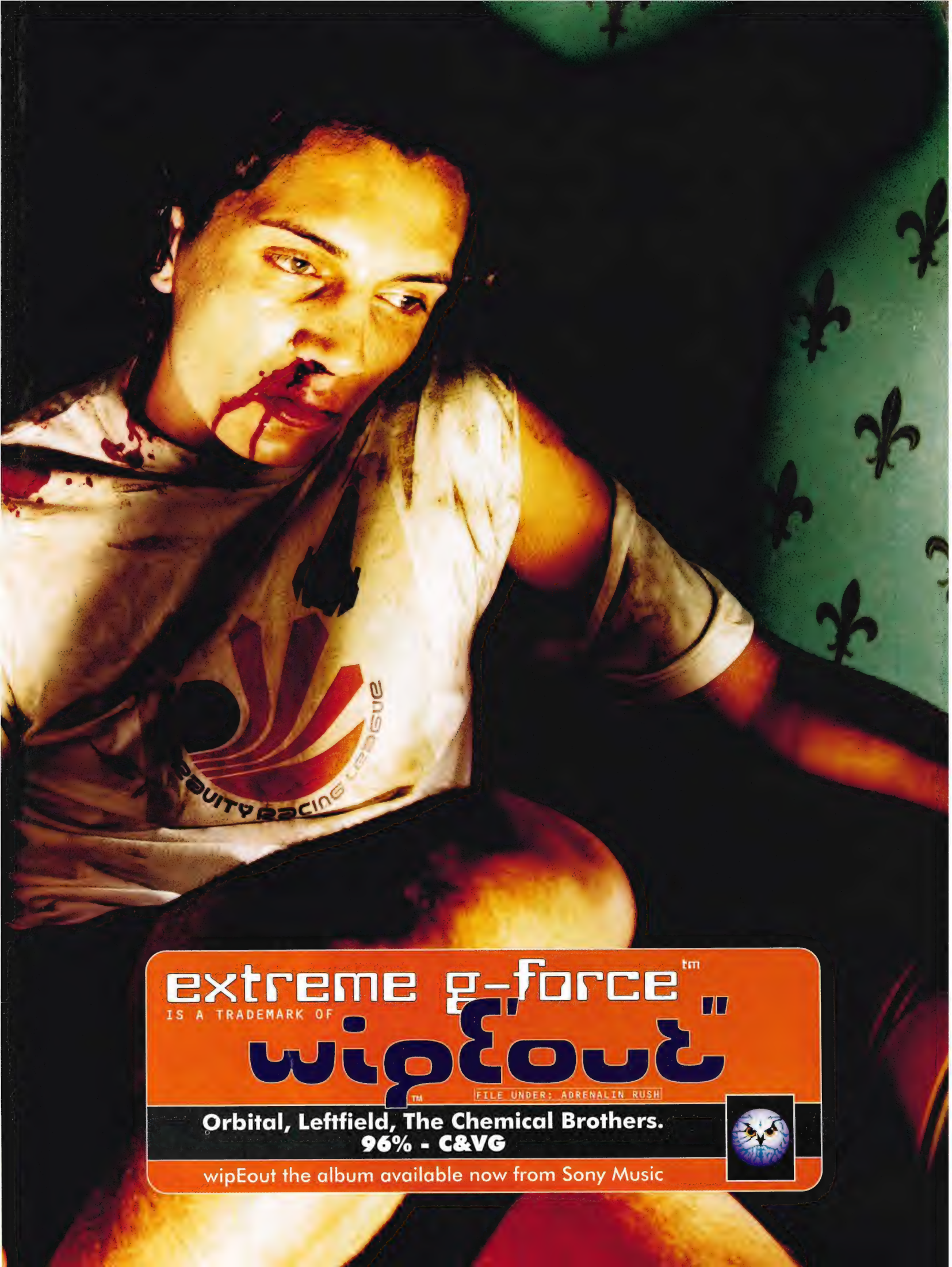


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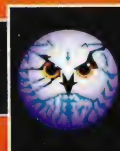


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Street Fighter Alpha: Warriors' Dreams

RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	TBA
BY	VIRGIN
PLAYERS	1-2
GENRE	BEAT 'EM UP



ou can call me Mr Sad if you like, but I'm well-excited by the prospect of *Street Fighter Alpha* on the PlayStation.

There aren't many games that have such a hold over me, and to date, only *Tekken* and *WipeOut* have managed to draw me in as far as lasting PSX software goes. I bought an Amiga on the strength of having seen *Lemmings*, and I bought a SNES simply because my mate's machine got stolen and we were lost of an evening without *Street Fighter 2*.

And so, much to my glee, *Street Fighter Alpha* trundles towards us (albeit not fast enough for my liking!) boasting a number of new features, new characters, and new graphics. Understanding the need to leave things alone as much as possible — to avoid upsetting the die-hard players — Capcom have retained the same method of control and game style, but have added a number of new elements to the gameplay.

Set in a time after the original *Street Fighter* and *Final Fight* (an older Capcom beat 'em up) but before *SF2*, *Warrior's Dreams* takes existing characters and supes them up with more cartoon-like Manga-looking graphics, and a plethora of new moves. Auto-block options are available for beginners, and counter-moves for defending against cheesy throws are all in there. But that's just the tip of the iceberg...



FINISH HIM!

With there being so many different ways to defeat an opponent, the scoring system now recognises how you choose to finish off your prey, displaying a symbol accordingly. Finish the round using a standard attack and you'll just get a standard 'V' for victory sign. Use a Special attack or even a Super-Special attack however, and you'll get a nice big 'S*' medal.

Should you choose the quick and easy path — such as a cheesy throw, or cornering your opponent with crappy shots — you'll receive a wedge of cheese to let all those watching know that you're less than human. Bah, there goes that technique then!



BISH BOSH BOOM!

Street Fighter Alpha features the same Super moves and Super finishes that we saw in Acclaim's *Street Fighter: The Movie* (pew! What's that smell?)

Thus, in a rather unsurprising turn of events, *Alpha* also features the same impressive flash of light should you finish with a super-duper move. A good one to impress the girlies with, this. Perchang!



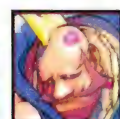
HE'S BACK AGAIN!

He's Bison, he's a git, and he's back! Yep, as rock-hard as ever, the main man Bison is still the one to beat, but he comes complete with a number of awesome new moves.



A BEAT 'EM UP BUFFET

Whereas the various *Street Fighter* versions have, over the years, generally stuck with the same characters (the only major exception being the inclusion of four extra fighters for *Super Street Fighter 2*) *Warrior's Dreams* has a number of new characters. Well, when I say new, I only mean new to *Street Fighter*. Capcom have gone back through their games and selected some of the top fighters from other beat 'em ups released in the past.



BIRDIE

On of the fighters from the original *Street Fighter* game (Number One that is) Birdie is another big, slow fighter who makes up for his cumbersome moves with heavy-hitting and powerful combos. Birdie is a retired bouncer who's just in it for the money. Aren't we all mate, aren't we all!

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW...

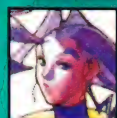
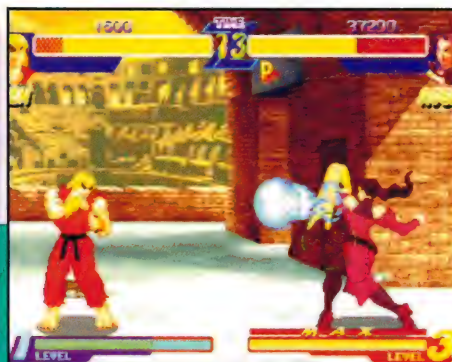
As well as the characters brought in from other Capcom games, there are (of course!) lots of old favourites from the mega-success-

ful *Street Fighter 2* series. And as if that was not enough choice for you, there are also a few new faces...



CHUN-LI

Chun-Li was always a bit to large-of-thigh for my liking, but she does appear to have slimmed down for *Alpha*, and even has a new outfit. In-line with her new job — an undercover cop — Chunners has a new Super combo attack, while her legendary (if near-useless) Spinning Bird Kick has been replaced with a new Vertical Drill Kick. May I just say, it will be sadly missed.



ROSE

A complete new-comer, Rose is a Chun-Li-esque character who relies heavily on multiple-hit techniques and the ability to reflect both

Fire Balls and Sonic Booms. Tres handy indeed, non?



WHEN YOU COME TO SELECT YOUR CHARACTER, YOU CAN ALSO SELECT THE SPEED OF PLAY, AND WHETHER YOU WANT AUTO-BLOCKING (FOR THE BEGINNER) OR NORMAL CONTROL.



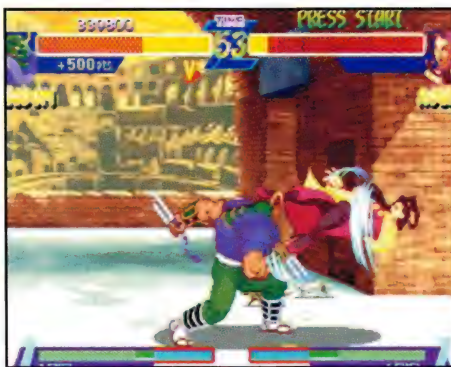
NASH

Though a brand new character, it must be said that Charlie Nash is nothing more than a 'Guile-in-disguise'. A close friend of the aforementioned brush-head, Nash even uses the same Flash Kicks and Sonic Booms, and his near-identical fighting style will be familiar to any seasoned *Street Fighter* player.



GUY

This ninjitsu master was one of the three characters available in Capcom's sideways-scrolling *Final Fight*. Having helped Cody and Haggar (remember them?) bring down the Mad Gear gang, Guy enters the *Alpha* tournament armed with tremendous speed and some stunning combos.



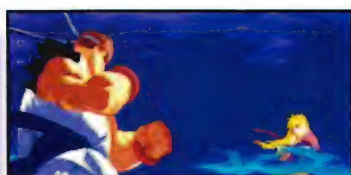
SODOM

Known as The Mad Gear Mauler, Sodom was originally an end of level baddie from *Final Fight* who took great delight in running at you with his enormous swords and helmet (er... if memory serves). He's thrown away the swords in favour of sai, and is best described as a Zangief with attitude.

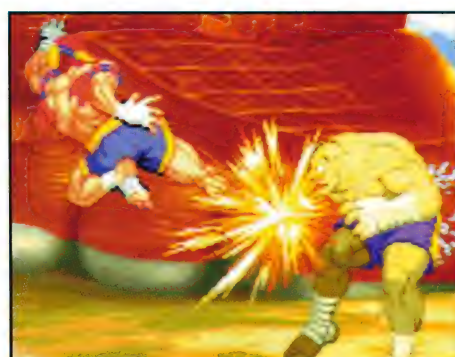


ADON

Another original *Street Fighter* character, Adon is a more agile (but less powerful) version of the kick-boxer, Sagat. He comes with fast punch/kick multiples and a flash kick (batteries not supplied).



EVERY TIME YOU PERFORM A SPECIAL MOVE, YOU CHARGE UP THE SPECIAL POWER BAR AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN. ONCE IT'S FULL TO BRIMMING, IT'S TIME TO TRY A SUPER-SPECIAL MOVE. EFF!



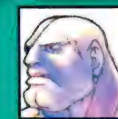
RYU

A welcome face indeed. This is Ryu's seventh appearance in a *Street Fighter* game (as it is for Ken, Chun-Li, Bison, etc) and he remains the 'bread-and-butter' fighter in the game. Armed with some new 'Super' moves, Ryu remains the most accessible fighter in the game (well I think so anyway).



KEN

Ultimately out to test Ryu, Ken enters the *Alpha* tournament armed with a few new moves on top of his normal repertoire. He also appears to have much longer hair, but as for whether this will add anything to the game, well, who can say?



SAGAT

Following the total humiliation he suffered at the hands of Ryu (haven't you seen the animated movie yet?) Sagat returns with a range of new kick-boxing moves and augmented Tiger Special attacks. He's also still jolly tall.



NBA In The Zone

COMPANY	KONAMI
RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	TBA
PLAYERS	1-8
GENRE	SPORTS SIM



he battle for court supremacy is in full swing, with Konami rising to the challenge set by Sony's

impressive-looking *Total NBA*. Having established themselves as first class sports developers with *International Superstar Soccer* for the Super NES, Konami's Japanese Research and Development team have set their sights on the PlayStation basketball crown, creating a 3D court containing motion-captured players with enough moves to befuddle even the Harlem Globe-trotters. With the Sony game now heading for a belated March release, it could be that the two

rival games will be trading dunks at retail level as well as on their polygon-generated courts.

NBA In the Zone offers a full selection of 29 NBA teams, with Konami's programmers also planning to add a couple of 'All-Star' sides in the final code. Having selected your side from the introductory map screen, the action switches to the court and its free-floating camera views. While *NBA In the Zone* shares a lot of common ground with the Sony game, its player sprites are absolutely massive, towering above those of the Sony game and Acclaim's *NBA Jam*, and the attention to detail is incredible — the texture-mapping is so detailed, the players resemble the digitised pictures which appear when they are in possession of the ball!

As the players bob and weave towards the hoop, sampled commentary keeps the player abreast

of shots and passes, while a subdued tuned pounds away in the background. Konami's Japanese team have been given the highest acclaim possible by their Basketball-mad US division, and watching *NBA In the Zone* battle it out against Sony's *Total NBA* is going to be one hell of a match.



SIZE DOES COUNT...

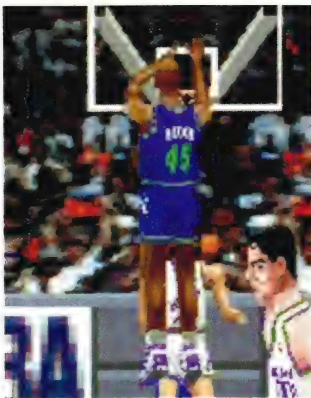
Watching *NBA In the Zone* in action is absolutely incredible. Having been impressed by *NBA Jam*'s sheer playability, we'd be the first to admit that it could never be classed a 'real' basketball simulation. *NBA In the Zone*, however, features all

the passing, dribbling, and dunking we've come to expect, but adds ideas never seen in such a game. Players can feint a pass only to carry on running with the ball, dribble the ball between different hands to avoid an opponent's block, and

spin away from a mass of defenders to try an over-the-head shot. It has to be said, that the Konami game is incredible to watch and, even in the 70% complete version we've seen (the camera views had to be selected by hand), it

moves incredibly well. The motion-capture is some of the best we've seen, and the large sprites ensure that all the work that has gone into recreating real-life players as texture-mapped characters hasn't gone to waste. Smart.





THE REPLAY MODE OFFERS SUPERB VIEWS OF THE BEST DUNKS AND LONG DISTANCE SHOTS.

PASSING IS INCREDIBLY REALISTIC, WITH THE PLAYERS TURNING AND SPINNING WITH THE BALL.



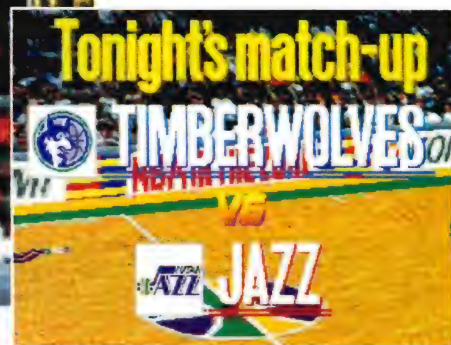
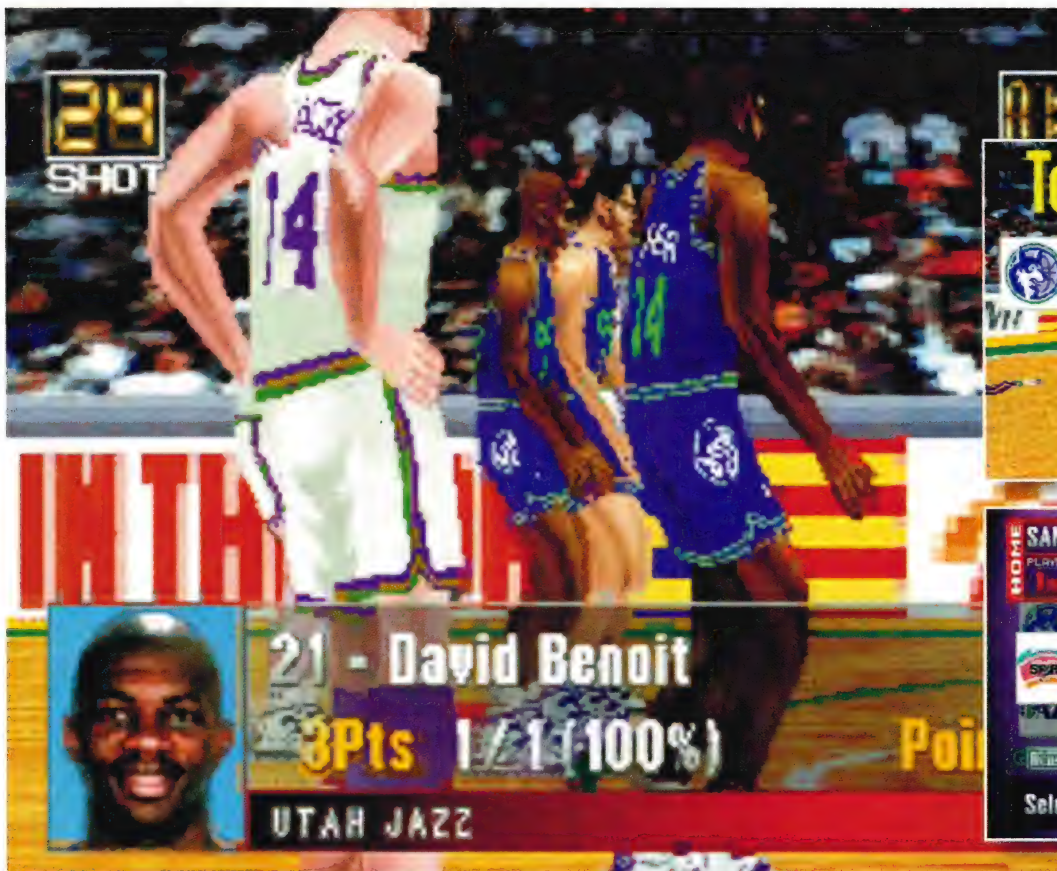
A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

As can be expected of a game endorsed by the NBA, all the current teams and players have been recreated. Virtually every US city has a team, and the game is bro-

ken down into states which are highlighted at the start of a game and selected with a press of the O button — with a selection of team and individual play-

er stats displaying each one's strengths and weakness. Via two Multi-Tap adaptors, up to eight players can enter the many tournaments on offer, with five peo-

ple playing in the same team, or splitting the odds fairly and opting for four against four with a CPU player in each team. Play-Offs and Finals are also available, with players choosing from the 'Home' and 'Away' teams in a league system which can be saved down to a memory card after every match.



HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES

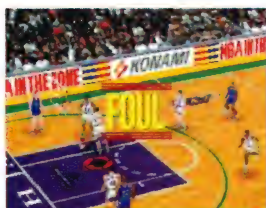
After the likes of *NBA Jam*, home basketball fans have come to expect something out of the ordinary from their pixelated players. However, while *NBA In the Zone* has more than its fair share of fancy dunks and shots on offer, it never enters the realm of disbelief created by *NBA Jam*'s gravity-defying leaps and net-burning long shots.

Konami have deliberately kept *Zone*'s controls to a minimum, with two buttons used to pass and shoot when in possession or switch control between players or block when defending. Shooting is effected using the square button and is best attempted from outside the penalty area, with the X button used for slams and dunks. The style

of dunk depends on a number of factors — the position of the player in relation to the hoop when the button is pressed, opposing players in the area, etc — but extra pizzazz can be added by twirling the Dpad in conjunction with the square button to hang off the hoop after a shot or rise well above the defence for a satisfyingly hard slam.



RULES OF THUMB



Apparently, the NBA are notoriously picky when it comes to endorsing approved product, so naturally enough *NBA In the Zone* features all the rules you'd expect from a basketball game. Mimicking the real thing, three-pointers are considerably harder to pull off than in rival titles, and blocking requires perfect timing if a 'physical' foul is to be avoided. Play is stopped by the on-court referee and a foul awarded if a player keeps hold of the ball for more than 24 seconds or if the ball is held in their half of the court for longer than 10 seconds. If a player is physically fouled while taking a shot, they are awarded a 'free throw' — the basketball equivalent to a penalty. If, after the foul, the ball goes in, one free throw is given, but if the foul causes the player to miss, two shots at the hoop are allowed.



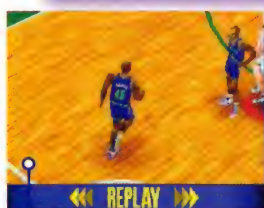
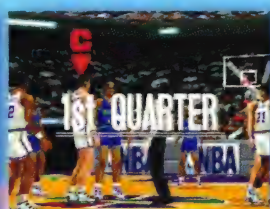
ON THE BOX



Considering *NBA In the Zone*'s Japanese origins, the pre-match presentation is surprisingly akin to watching a televised US game. Konami's programmers have added a num-

ber of small touches which add to the feeling of watching a televised match, with cameras panning around the court to capture the pixelated crowd, commentators introducing the

teams and their match history, and the ref running on to the court with the ball, with both sides sending forward an attacker ready for the tip-off.



THE BIRD'S EYE-VIEW IS PERFECT FOR REVIEWING THE PASSING MOVES IN AN ACTION REPLAY. THE BEST POSSIBLE VIEW IS USED EVERY TIME.

BLOCKING IS EXTREMELY EASY TO EFFECT, WITH THE SPRITES REACTING QUICKLY TO THE PLAYER'S FRANTIC BUTTON BASHING. THE ONLY SOLUTION TO SUCH BLOCKS IS A RAPID PASSING MOTION.



NBA IN THE ZONE FEATURES A FULL COMPLEMENT OF NBA PLAYERS, WITH THEIR STATS AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING.

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COMPANY	BMG
RELEASE	FEBRUARY
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1
GENRE	PLATFORM



If there's one thing to be thankful to Sony for, it's the fact that they have

never succumbed to a mascot for the PlayStation. As Sonic starts to look tired, his planned debut in a Saturn title has yet to materialise, and in the meantime poor old Mario features even less in Nintendo's plans for the Ultra 64. And think about the 3DO. There was Trip Hawkins, genuinely enthusiastic for this CD-based machine, telling of fantastic games just over the horizon which would revolutionise the industry, and what did he get? *ShockWave Assault* and *Off-World Interceptor*. Poor sod. Mind you, both have made it over to the PlayStation, so perhaps he's got the last laugh after all. Of all the 3DO titles to emerge, though, only one stood any chance of capturing the imaginations of younger 3DO users: Crystal Dynamics' *Gex*.

Now, as with the aforementioned 3DO hand-me-downs, PlayStation owners can sample the delights of *Gex*. Effectively a reptilian version of a certain Hedgehog, Gex is a running, jumping, climbing and fire-spitting hero trapped in a nightmarish scrolling world where television programmes come to life. With worlds based on horror films, westerns and science-fiction throwing up hazards based on their graphical themes, Gex's aim is to make it to the end of the stage, collecting objects needed to make it into the next stage, and ultimately destroy the television at the end of the stage. Currently scheduled for a February release, you can find out if Gex is a new hero for the PlayStation or just another unwanted 3DO port next month.

THE GAME INTRO SHOWS GEX RECLINING IN HIS CHAIR, BEFORE BEING SUCKED INTO 'MEDIA WORLD' BY AN UNKNOWN ENEMY.

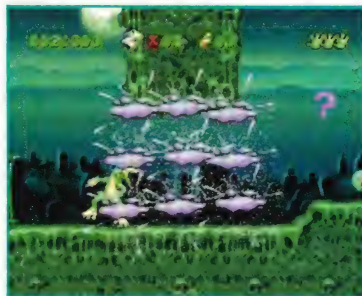
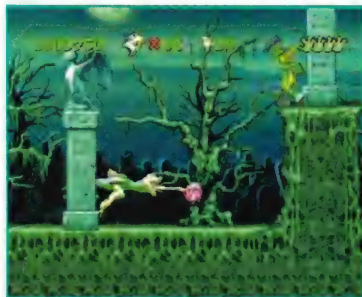


GEX APPEAL

In addition to the customary running and jumping skills, Gex also has a number of unique reptilian skills to hand — including the obligatory regenerating tail...

BUM BOUNCE

Ah, the old platform game stalwart! Used to destroy trap doors to access hidden passages, and or to kill a foe in mid-leap.



TONGUE LASH

Used to collect the power-ups dotted around the levels, but can be upgraded to a fireball (see box).



CLIMBING WALLS

Replete with superb sucking sound, Gex's adventures often call for him to grip on to a wall to evade acid pools or spike pits. Thankfully, his tail is still on hand to bat away unwanted attention.



TAIL LASH

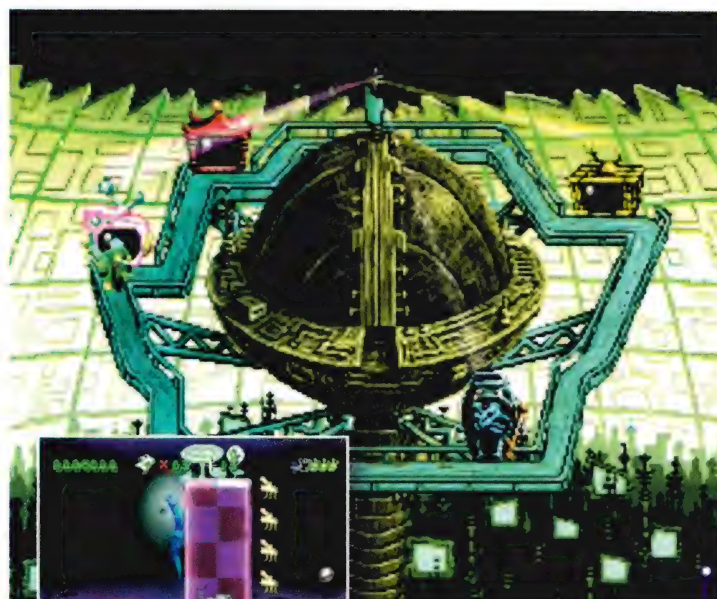
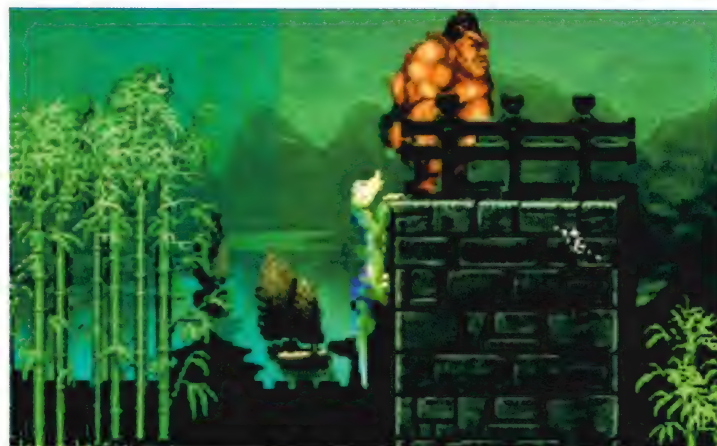
Gex's main line of defence is his sweeping roundhouse tail lash. Deadly to any foe, and also used to bat thrown objects back at their source — or oncoming foes.



PILL POPPIN'



Contact with the many enemy sprites deplete's Gex's energy, although top-ups are available along the way courtesy of the coloured globes littered throughout the levels. If Gex uses his tail to bat these, his energy is supplemented slightly, but if our hero's sticky tongue slurps them in instead, he is temporarily infused with special abilities. The colour-coded pills range from red to replace his sticky tongue with flame-throwing skills, green to send him scudding across the landscape at a hugely exaggerated speeds, and blue for temporary invincibility in the shape of a personal force-field. Other useful objects include a Polaroid camera used to save Gex's current position, and golden coins which, when totalling 100, add an extra life to Gex's inventory.



THE TELEVISIONS ARE ACTIVATED WHENEVER GEX RECOVERS ONE OF THE REMOTE CONTROL UNITS.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

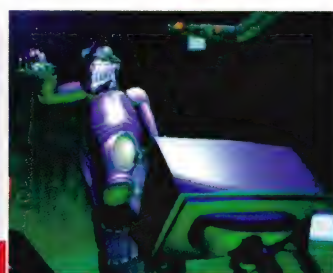
Extra life has been breathed into the Gex sprite courtesy of HBO and Showtime's (no, we don't know either), Dana Gould. As the scaly scally enters each stage, Dana's on hand with a snappy repaste, and this continues as

Gex scampers from one side of the eight-way-scrolling play area to the other. These include jibes at recently-deceased foes, protests if energy is lost, and a passing shot when he kicks the bucket. Hilarious. No, really.



GEX'S RED SKIN INDICATES HE HAS FIRE-BREATHING SKILLS.

DURING THE INTRO, THE SAMPLED TONES OF DANA GOULD ARE EVER-PRESENT. SADLY.



COMPANY	ACCLAIM
RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	TBA
PLAYERS	1
GENRE	ADVENTURE



roving that anything the PC can do, the PlayStation can more than match,

Acclaim have teamed up with Japanese developers Warp, to unleash the decidedly-odd *D* on to the Sony machine.

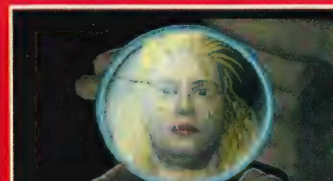
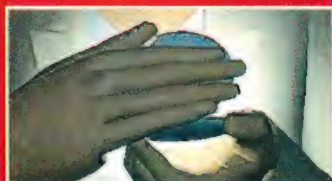
Reminiscent of Virgin's *7th Guest*, *D* is another 'interactive movie', with the player donning the high heels of the female heroine, Laura, who finds herself locked in a creepy hospital on the trail of her surgeon father. According to the lengthy intro preceding the game, Laura's dad has gone crazy-ape for no apparent reason and has holed himself up in the towering LA hospital building, offing anyone he finds. The reasons for his psychotic episode are unknown, and the game begins with Laura driving up to the murky building, as the intro cuts to scenes of pa's victims lining the corridors. The largest game to grace the PlayStation yet — it spans three CDs — *D* truly lives up to its 'movie' tag. Each of the rooms is fully light-sourced, and as the player moves Laura from room to room, the said locations are streamed from the CD and move surprisingly smoothly. The hospital isn't all it seems, though, and a warp gate transports our heroine into an old house broken up into strange rooms. As Laura moves through the towering building, clues and puzzles appear to be solved and collected respectively. Initially, however, Laura is armed with nowt but a compact — and also finds herself the victim of psychedelic episodes which start to reveal later aspects of the bizarre scenario. Curiouser and curiouser...



NHS CRISIS

Rather than opt for an FMV environment, Warp have created a fully detailed building which is streamed off the CD as Laura enters each room. Every room exists as a full 3D location and, as such, can be viewed from any angle and any object manipulated freely. The Dpad is used to direct Laura through the rooms and up and down

the stairs, and the arrival of any objects or other characters is heralded by a small intercut scene or the opening of a small window offering a closer view of the said item. Similarly, as Laura trundles around, important clues are offered in the way of dream sequences which become more frequent and revealing as the mystery of Laura's old man is explored.



INTRODUCING...



1997 LOS ANGELES



D's presentation is some of the best we have seen on any game – but, spread across three CDs, so it should be! We join the game as Laura's dad goes insane, before witnessing the blonde Laura taking a call from the authorities reporting his misdemeanours. From here, Laura jumps into her yellow motor, while further examples of her old man's scalpel work are displayed slumped against corridors walls. From here, though, she's on her own.



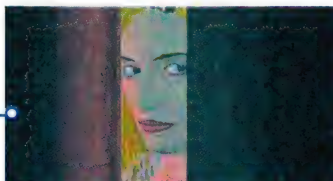
GRAPHIC DEATH



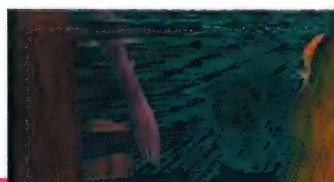
1. INTREPID EXPLORER, LAURA, OPENS A DOOR TO A WHAT SHE IMAGINES TO BE ONE OF THE BEDROOMS...



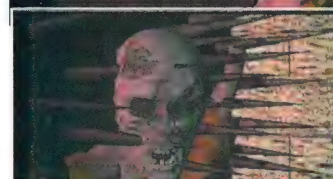
2. AS THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN, HER WARY GAZE IS SWALLOWED BY THE DARKNESS WITHIN THE ROOM.



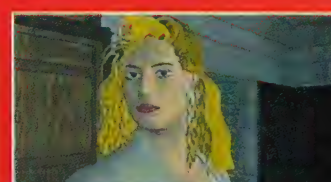
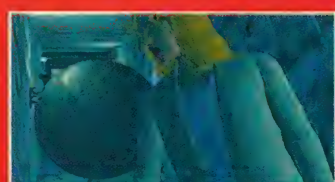
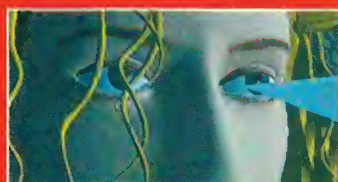
D looks set to upset the censors with its graphic death scenes. Laura's dad is a bit of a sadistic bast' and the game delights in showing the player graphic scenes of murder, bodily mutilation, and other such MP-upsetting delights. The most impressive aspect of *D*, however, is that the introductory sequences are identical in graphic style to the actual game stages, so there's none of this FMV intro leading into a sprite-fest bollocks. The down-side however, is that when an intercut scene ends you're often left standing around waiting for something to happen, when it's your turn to make Laura do something!



3. LIGHT POURS INTO THE ROOM, AND LAURA GASPS IN REPULSION AS THE IMPALED FORMS OF THREE EMACIATED BODIES ARE REVEALED.



4. THE GAME CAMERA PANS AWAY AS THE FULL EXTENT OF THE CARNAGE IS REVEALED.



ADIDAS POWER SOCCER



With eyes now firmly on Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* to see if it can knock *FIFA '96* from its recently-acquired soccer throne, a few late stragglers are also set to make a belated assault on the Sony kickabout scene. Previously known as Powersports Soccer, Sony Interactive have signed a deal with sportswear giants Adidas, and — voila — a new licensed title is born.

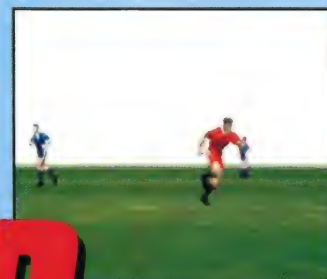
Adidas Power Soccer is moving rather slowly through development, but SIE's French team have made huge leaps over the hastily put together code seen in PSP1. The code we have seen is now approaching the 60% complete mark, with the panoramic views and majority of motion-capture animation up and running (and heading and kicking).

APS mimics the likes of *FIFA* and *Actua* in that the player is given full control over the views of the pitch during play, allowing for swooping close-ups of the bicycle kicks and volleys on offer. However, while comparisons are inevitable, SIE's coding team claim it outscores its many rivals on two main points: playability and realism. Having studied every footy game available, SIE have made a note of respective titles' strengths and weaknesses and tried to wrap them up in *APS* — as such, learning from EA's 3DO version of *FIFA*, they are opting for views galore but utilising the speed and precision of Amiga stalwart, *Sensible Soccer*. They are also showcasing their motion-capture techniques by featuring the closest views possible without the action slowing down, with the onscreen sprites churning the ball down (complete with wavering arms and realistic recoil) before turning on a sixpence for the volley. Of course, every PlayStation football game known to man has emerged on the scene making

such promises, and the more cynical among us will point to *Striker* and *Goal Storm* as those which promised all but delivered stuff all. Even so, if looks alone could kill, *APS* has already lain waste to most of its rivals in a bloody coup. But the idea of March will release all, when SIE finally unleash *APS* on to the footy-loving PlayStation-owning public...



COMPANY	SIE
RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	TBA
PLAYERS	1-4
GENRE	SPORTS SIM



THE GAME CAMERA PANS TO FOLLOW THE BALL, WITH A FULL VIEW OF THE STAND SHOWN FOR HIGH BALLS.

THE MUDDY GOAL AREA SLOWS THE BALL DOWN.



IN CONTROL

APS aims to be the most comprehensive soccer game to date, with virtually every conceivable onfield move recreated for the PlayStation game. The basic four face buttons effect passes, shots, chips and lob while in possession of the ball, but double up for lunging tackles, fouls and switching between players when without. In addition to these, though, SIE France have also added a wealth of diving headers, bicycle kicks and 'power' shots, which

are pulled off using combinations of the buttons, and are dependent on timing and the height of the ball. The 'power' shots, though, are a different kettle of trout, however, and may only be used by specific players. A yellow marker indicates those capable of these blistering shots, and pressing the button as it appear unleashes a shot that makes Nayim's hopeful lob against David Seaman seem like a fluky toe-punt (come to think of it...).





I FEEL THE NEED...

One noticeable feature of APS is its incredible speed. The action tears along at a fair old whack, and with practice superb set-pieces and goal opportunities can be pieced together at a speed most of its Sony rivals would die for. This is SIE's

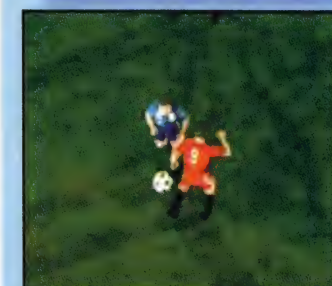
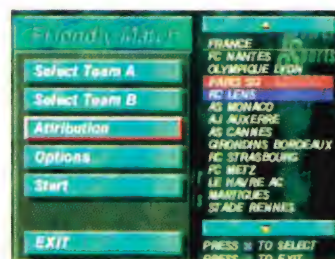
compromise between realism and arcade pace, with the full set of moves still available, but at a pace more consistent of the likes of *Sensi* and consequently relying on reflexes and timing. Cool.

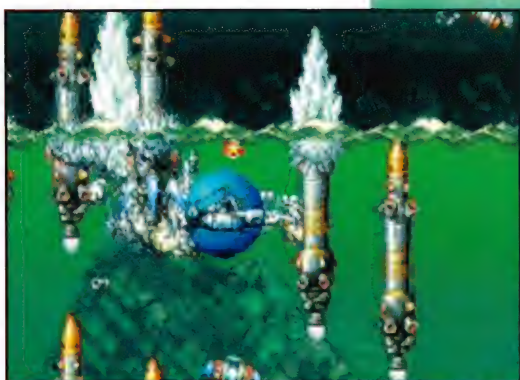


CUP A LOAD OF THAT

APS is fully optioned up, with no less than three international leagues on offer: French, German and one for good ol' Blighty. Thus, if the opportunity of leading West Ham to their destiny at the top of the Premier League isn't to your liking, then perhaps making St Etienne french masters would be more up your alley. Or allez. With your international side selected, SIE have also allowed the player carte blanche

at tinkering with their side, with options to practice penalties, set pieces and the like in the final code. Similarly, the tactical side of the game is also open to redesigning, with your final choices then put into practice in the aforementioned league or one of the cup tournaments also included.





COMPANY	THQ
RELEASE	FEBRUARY
PRICE	£39.99
PLAYERS	1-2
GENRE	SHOOT 'EM UP

In The Hunt

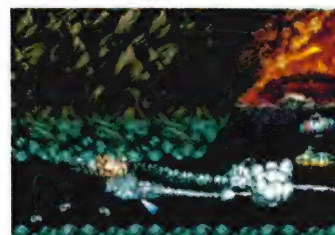
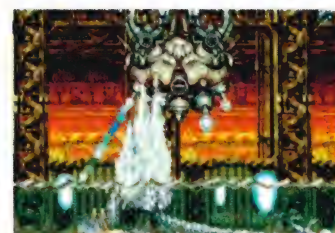


As THQ enter the PlayStation arena, we once again find the world on the brink of war. The evil Dark Anarchy Society has seized control over half the world's cities, and are planning to overpower the remainder in a last-ditch assault, throwing everything they have into a full-scale invasion. As the commander of a high-tech submarine currently on exercises in the South Atlantic, you have been assigned to lead the attack

on the nerve centre of the DAS base. It's whereabouts is uncertain, but intelligence reports indicate it is located deep within an underwater cave system which has been pinpointed by radar as housing an unusual amount of activity. However, other reports indicate huge fleets spreading out from apparently nowhere, with alien creatures mingling with the assorted helicopters, submersibles and ground installations.

Predictably, due to an attack on your home base, back-up sup-

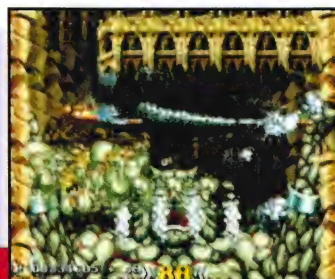
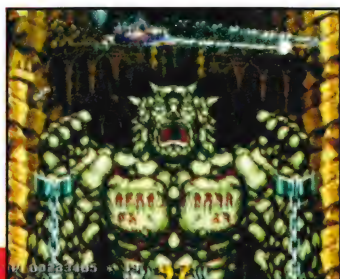
port is limited to a second sub built to the same specifications as your own, thus inviting a second player to take on the DAS. As such, with a second player in tow, the trip through the game's eight-way-scrolling caverns begins. With an on-board selection of missiles and depth charges, and further supplies rescued from the DAS ships you destroy, you are entering the battle full prepared to save the world single-handedly. Yep, once again, the fate of the world is in your hands.



NAME THAT (NEP)TUNE

Like *Raiden Project* before it, *In The Hunt* is a shoot 'em up of the old school, with every level ending in a larger, 'boss' creature or ship. Initially, the bosses are hugely-over-sized submarines spewing out loads of missiles, or pairing up with a clone ship and using a tractor beam to pull the player to their doom, but as the waters get deeper

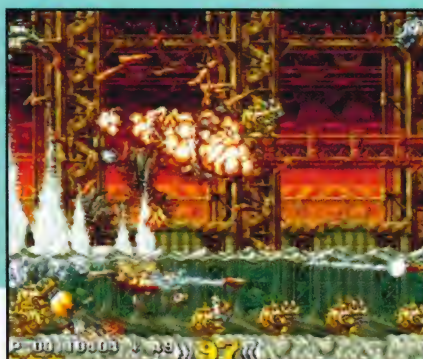
and darker, a number of horrendous sea monsters join in the fun. By far the most interesting of these, though, is a stone statue of Neptune, god of the sea, who bursts from the seabed, scales up the screen in pursuit of your relatively tiny sub, forcing it through solid walls before cornering the player for a final face-off.



CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

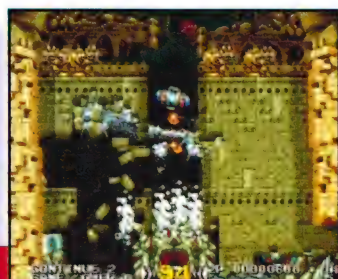
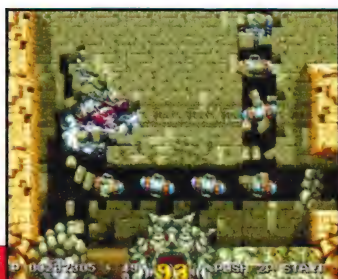
Players one and two control the US Azure Scourge (blue in colour – au naturelle) and the US Crimson (red) respectively. With the Dpad guiding the ships through the water and away from flak and danger, the X and square buttons are used for the two sets of armaments the subs have on board. Anyone familiar with the likes of *The Hunt for Red October*, *Crimson Tide* or *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* will be

familiar with torpedoes and their devastating abilities, but *In The Hunt* goes one better by sticking a machine gun next to the periscope. Both weapons can also be upgraded using the icon pods left in the detritus of wasted foes. These include upgraded torpedoes with greater firepower, and homing missiles, floating mines and tracking missiles to replace the machine gun unit.



LEVEL-HEADED

The player's journey through to the DAS hidden base spans six stages, and begins in the South Pole which is effectively a warm-up stage with a modicum of enemy ships and mines galore. Next, a dock area invites the player to destroy a huge boat-building plant, while later levels hold undersea ruins, a version of Atlantis, and a dark volcanic cavern, which paves the way into the enemy base. Each level follows the same theme of wanton destruction, however, and along the way the player will find themselves blasting holes in a sunken tower block in search of power-ups before blowing up a bridge before a train gets to drop its payload from above.



RELEASE	TBA
PRICE	£39.99
BY	MINDSCAPE
PLAYERS	1-4
GENRE	RPG

Warhammer

THE EMPEROR SENDS PEOPLE TO THEIR DEATHS - AND THEN GOES TO WATCH SPAIN SLAUGHTER ENGLAND AT FOOTY.



Games Workshop kicked off the popularity of Warhammer way back when Duran Duran, The Human League and Spandau Ballet were considered serious musicians rather than sad old farts from days gone by. Not that one would say Warhammer is similarly out of time, but the idea of dwarves, elves and orcs summons up images of long winter evening table-top games with tiny metal figures and aggrieved mothers wanting their tables back to prepare dinner.

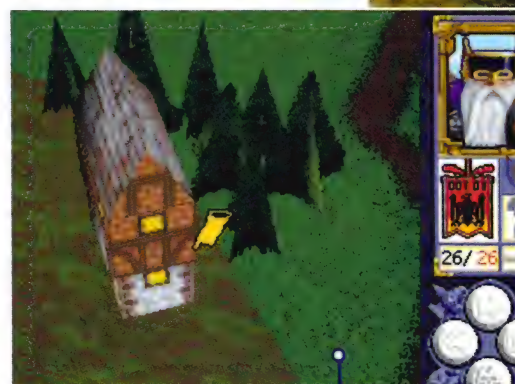
Here, in *Shadow of the Horned Rat*, we see a new breath of life pumped into the old format as our friendly neighbourhood murderous meenies run around 3D landscapes complete with multiple games pathways, vast 'n' violent arcade-like battles and, it says here, "rousing music" - probably the sort you yawn through every year when the BBC replaces Saturday morning television with *The Trooping of the Colour*.

Before you head off to battle though, you receive detailed briefings from your employers, all of whom want to be taken seriously as they order you to kill the enemy, save various groups of peasants and decidedly unsafe-looking buildings while ensuring that you don't get your nurdle-bits hacked off by aggrieved Grudgebringers. So, take up your shields, guard your loins, grab your swords and prepare to meet the enemy on a blood-soaked battlefield.

Ah, if only Spandau Ballet were there to be sliced 'n' diced - that really would be a battle worth joining ...



YOUR MOTLEY BAND'S PROGRESS IS DETAILED BY THE CONSPICUOUS-LOOKING YELLOW HAND ICON WHICH DOUBLES UP AS A CONTROL DEVICE.



THE MANY TOWNS AND BUILDINGS ARE REALISED IN FULL, SCALED 3D - WITH PERFECT USE OF PERSPECTIVE.

WAR. WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

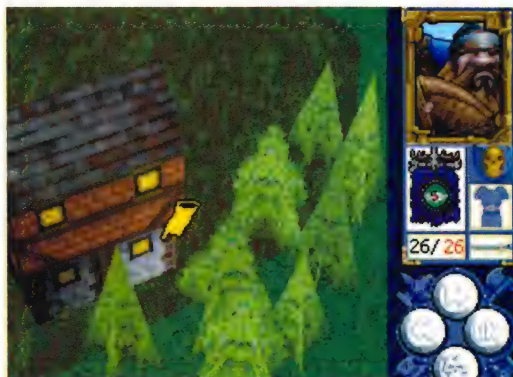
Inbetween battles (unless you're dead, of course) you can marshal your forces, bolster their spirits, assess your situation and generally decide what the hell you're going to do next to try and stay alive. And while resting after each mission, narrative storytelling links the bloodshed and generally makes sense of your situation. These are more than just pep-talks though, as they add new elements to your quest and draw the player further and further into the game. Will you still trust your employer? Will your troops still follow your lead? Are your decisions the right ones? Will the Skaven win the Eurovision Song Contest? All these questions and many others may possibly be answered in the next exciting instalment ...



ORC-ESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK

Mindscape's strategy epic is based closely on Games Workshop's *Warhammer Fantasy Battle*, one of the globe's biggest selling table-top games that has captured the imagination of adults and children alike. Fought with huge armies of tiny lead Orcs, dwarves and other fantastic monstrosities, the outcome of each battle depends on skill, strategy and the luck of the dice roll. The original *Warhammer* has spawned many other games too, including the *Warhammer RPG* and the increasingly popular futuristic war game, *Warhammer 40,000*. More recently Games Workshop has branched out into the realms of board games with *Warhammer Quest* and *Necromunder*, both based on classic *Warhammer* game world.





WAR IS BAD FOR YOUR ELF

The battles between your ragbag gang of murderous swine and their ragbag gang of murderous swine are all fought in real time, in highly detailed 3D environments, which provides both time and a fair idea of how best to proceed with each campaign. Using the point-and-click interface, everything comes easily to hand (or screen) as you need it to, ensuring that just as you think you've deployed your own scumbags successfully, another group don't come and pole-axe you from behind (not a pretty sight). You have multiple choices throughout the game, which at least adds to the continued playability and with network options available, you can link up with other PlayStations and either support or rend asunder your mates.



HAMM(ER)ING IT UP

Apparently you are the commander of some mercenary types and finding yourself on the less-than-peaceful haven of Warhammer means there's killing aplenty for you. Feel free to drag your eager and bloodthirsty troops into conflict as they face onslaughts of Orcs, Skaven, Goblins and even the fell creatures of Chaos. Look around as blood mingles with blood, limbs lop off other limbs and heads roll with alarming regularity. Assuming you and your hoards survive this charming afternoon's slaughter, you'll be well-rewarded with cartloads of Blood-Gold. Strikes me that the makers of those adverts for joining the TA could learn a lot from a bunch of vicious Goblin squaddies!





Congratulations on purchasing a PlayStation. The three hundred pounds you've wisely invested has bought you a slice of next generation video gaming, and in the process has doubled your credibility. You'll now be more highly regarded by friends and family and should have no problem attracting members of the opposite sex. Okay, the PlayStation isn't quite *that* powerful, but now you've got the future of gaming what else is there to spend your cash on?



There's far more to the PlayStation than joypads, coloured cables and a dozen shiny CDs. Buying Sony's super console and a copy of, say, *WipeOut* is just the tip of the gaming iceberg as pads, peripherals and a stack of other PlayStation merchandising is becoming readily available. From memory cards to multi-tap adaptors, the list is ever-expanding. Sony's range of official products is fast being joined by a tidal wave of unendorsed (but equally as good) equipment, including a wide range of alternative joypads, cheat cartridges and cables.

The release of the PlayStation has even spawned a techno

compilation album featuring the break-beat talents of Orbital, Leftfield and The Chemical Brothers. And then there are the games. In just three months well over 20 titles have been released with more appearing each week.

But with so much to choose from how do you know what products deserve your attention and which should be left to gather dust on the shelves of your local computer store?

Allow *PlayStation Plus* to guide you through the overwhelming world of the Sony PlayStation and its peripherals as we rate every single game, joypad and 'optional extra' available this Christmas.



OUT NOW

TEKKEN

PRICE: £49.99
BY: NAMCO



There can't be a PlayStation owner in the country who isn't warm of heart and wet of trousers when it comes to Namco and their games. After creating the land-mark driving game *Ridge Racer*, they also set a whole new standard for beat 'em ups with *Tekken*. Everything about this game oozes class. The 3D graphics are the smoothest you'll find in a PlayStation combat game, while the moves, accompanied by sickening pops and cracks for dislocated limbs and broken bones, take computer rucking to a whole new level. On top of that is the value for money element. Each of the eight playable characters has their own individual boss who, when they've been defeated, also become selectable. It doesn't even finish there. There are also a couple of super-bosses so you can't accuse this game of being just another superficial slap-fest.

Tekken ranks alongside *WipeOut* as an essential PlayStation purchase. It harnesses the power the machine perfectly as well as incorporating original gameplay — something you don't often see in today's fighting games.

93%

WIPEOUT

PRICE: £44.99
BY: SIE



If there's one game which really shows exactly what the PlayStation is capable of, it's this. *WipeOut* cleans up in every area, from its blisteringly fast 3D graphics and thumping soundtrack through to its frantic pulse-battering race-game action. On the surface it seems as though a race game, even one set in the future with special floaty vehicles and smart weapons and which only has eight vehicles tearing round the tracks, can't really be that good. But on of the real challenges is actually being able to negotiate the courses, thanks to the weird handling of the vehicles and deviously designed tracks. It's only when you've got that in the bag that you can seriously look at winning races.

WipeOut is currently the ultimate showcase for next generation gaming. It's set to enjoy the same classic status on PlayStation that games like *Sonic* and *Mario Kart* enjoyed on older machines. It's quite simply the best thing going at the moment.

94%

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN

PRICE: £44.99
BY: SONY



Unlike many of the PlayStation's releases, rather than being a wholly original game *Toshinden* is actually a conversion of one of the first Japanese titles the machine had. Back when it first appeared it wowed everyone, mainly thanks to its stunning graphics. But when you got down to the gameplay the sheen soon started to wear off.

The problem with this game is that it's just too simple. The special moves are too complex to execute through a Dpad/attack button combination, so have to be assigned to the shoulder buttons. The result is a game which, depending on how you've configured the controller, is either too difficult or too simple.

If it wasn't for the arrival of *Tekken* on the scene, this game would probably be classified as the best 3D beat 'em up on the PlayStation — at least for the time being. In this case, while *Toshinden* was a great game to showcase the power of the PlayStation, it has been outclassed when it comes to pure, simple gameplay by Namco's world-beating slap-fest.

76%

Extras

DATel ACTION REPLAY

PRICE: £29.99
BY: DATel ELECTRONICS

The Action Replay was originally a hacking device for the Spectrum and Commodore 64, allowing users to 'back up' games and alter the code to get infinite lives and so on. While the PlayStation Action Replay isn't quite as versatile it still eases the nagging pain of level guardians and restrictive time limits. The Action Replay resembles a standard PlayStation memory card plugs into and the same slot, allowing access to a selection of previously saved game positions as well as a handful of cheats. The Action Replay contains cheats for nine different games, from selecting any level in *3D Lemmings*, via accessing the Rapiet championship in *WipeOut* to picking any of the hidden characters in *Tekken*. There is also an infinite energy cheat for *Destruction Derby*, a level select for *Jumping Flash* and a 'super cheat' for *Ridge Racer*, enabling drivers to compete in any of the 13 cars as well as play on all four tracks in both normal and mirror modes.



However, while some of the hacks are genuinely useful, many can be accessed with relative ease in other ways. For example, to access the other cars in *Ridge Racer* simply eliminate every alien in *Galaxians* during the sub-game. Still, if completing *Tekken* proves too tough or *Destruction Derby* is driving you up the wall, the Action Replay will provide some salvation.

★★★★☆

SONY MEMORY CARD

PRICE: £19.99
BY: SONY

Sony's memory card is an invaluable piece of equipment for any PlayStation owner. Sliding into the slot above joypad plug, the memory card allows you to store save games and high scores to RAM. This is a necessity when playing adventures like *Discworld* and even games like *Tekken* and *Jumping Flash*, enabling you to return to a saved level or fighter without the hassle of playing through previously competed sections.

Each card contains fifteen save slots, and while most games use a single slot for each save game, occasionally games take up to three. Therefore each card can store between eight and ten individual save games on average — fairly expensive at just under 20 quid but an indispensable 'extra' nonetheless.

★★★★★



DATel MEMORY CARD

PRICE: £19.99
BY: DATel ELECTRONICS

Erm, there's very little difference between the Sony Memory card and Datel's storage facility. In fact there's no difference

whatsoever — same price, same capacity, same everything. Hey, they even look identical so it doesn't really matter which card you opt for.

★★★★★



EURO AV CABLE

PRICE: £34.99

BY: VARIOUS

The Euro AV Cable is a SCART alternative to the RF connector supplied with the PlayStation. Plugging into the AV Multi Out socket in the back of the machine, the cable fits directly into the SCART connector of the television or via a video recorder. While the cable doesn't alter the screen size (the black borders still remain) picture clarity is increased dramatically. Forget the fuzzy borders of *Ridge Racer* and the blurry text in *Worms*, this cable will give you better



picture quality than Supa Snaps and makes high-gloss products like *WipeOut* look even better. By no means an essential purchase, although every discerning 'Station owner really should have one.

CABLE EXTENDER

PRICE: £7.99

BY: FIRE INTERNATIONAL

There's very little to say about the cable extender that it's name doesn't already suggest. It lengthens the joypad cable, allowing you to sit further away from your PlayStation. 1.8 metres further away, actually. But that's about it, although vertically challenged (short) gamers could use it as a skipping rope. Maybe.



MOUSE

PRICE: £24.99

BY: SONY

Some games just weren't made for the joypad. Point-and-click adventures are painfully difficult to play due to the inaccuracy offered by a Dpad controlled cursor, and first-person shoot 'em ups like *Starblade Alpha* are made almost impossible for much the same reason. So thank the Lord for the PlayStation mouse. This two-buttoned beauty is sleek yet sturdy, and will ease the suffering caused by clumsy joypad controls. Better still, there's even a smart PlayStation mouse mat included in the package. However, while the mouse makes some games considerably easier to play, it's doesn't always offer benefits over the pad.



STARBLADE ALPHA

For *Starblade Alpha* the mouse is an absolute godsend. Whereas the joypad offered sloppy, sluggish control over the aiming cursor, the mouse controls are accurate and responsive. You'll no longer die because you couldn't move the cursor fast enough and at last there's a slim chance of actually emerging victorious against the alien empire.

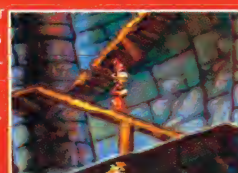
★★★★☆



DISC WORLD

Again the joypad isn't the ideal control system for his style of game. The mouse is much more suitable, and allows players to walk between scenes and flick from one area of interest to another with the minimum of fuss — no more delicately tapping the Dpad just to highlight a nearby object.

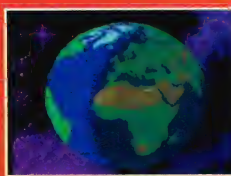
★★★★☆



X-COM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

To be perfectly honest *X-Com: Enemy Unknown* is perfectly playable with the joypad so the mouse is a bit redundant. Admittedly it allows you to flick between options faster and also makes the task of controlling your troops slightly easier, but these minor benefits hardly warrant paying out the extra £25.

★★★★☆



OVERALL

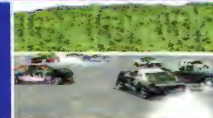
Although the mouse is an excellent piece of equipment it is rather limited. At present there are just a handful of compatible games available and of these *Starblade Alpha* is the only game where the mouse is really a necessity. The mouse mat is pretty cool though.

★★★★☆

DESTRUCTION DERBY

PRICE: £44.99

BY: SIE



In its first week on-sale *Destruction Derby* rammed its way into the top of the charts, becoming the fastest selling CD game of all time. And deservedly so. It finally gave driving game fans what they've been after for years — loads of really big pile-ups.

The game comes with two basic modes. The bulk of the tracks are designed for racing on, albeit with plenty of dirty tactics. But for real nutters there's an arena called the Bowl, which is nothing more than a giant pit where the aim is to rack up points by ramming the heck out of the other 19 cars. All this mass motorised violence is depicted with some of the best 3D graphics seen in any console driving game. The cars get more and more battered with their bodywork buckling and bonnets crumpling every time they take a hit. In short, the programmers set out to try and create the ultimate driving experience, and they've just about achieved it.

90%



RIDGE RACER

PRICE: £44.99

BY: NAMCO



This was the first big name game to appear on the PlayStation and firmly established Namco as one of the console's top developers. It's a perfect conversion of their smash-hit coin-op race game, with every detail of the original faithfully reproduced. While that means that its fast, smooth and very playable, it also makes for the games few failings. The biggest is that it only has one track. While new bits open and old bits are closed off as you win races, there's no getting away from the fact you're seeing the same old scenery over and over again. That's just one small blemish on an otherwise sterling game. While it has been superseded by games such as *WipeOut* and *Destruction Derby*, it's still a hell of a good game which fans of the original would be mad to miss.

88%

AIR COMBAT

PRICE: £44.99

BY: NAMCO



Proving that nobody's perfect, not even the creators of *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer*, is *Air Combat*. It's kind of like a flight sim, but with the sim bit substituted with shoot 'em up style action.

At first glance it seems rather jolly. There you are dive-bombing the world's trouble spots in a variety of high-tech and heavily armed aircraft with lots of nice explosions and things to destroy. But that's as far as it goes. Nothing really changes. The targets vary slightly and are more spread out, which means it's easy to lose them and run out of fuel while you fly around in little circles trying to find them. In the end it takes a fair wodge of perseverance and a large dose of aircraft enthusiast sadness to really enjoy the game. For those of us with our feet firmly on the ground, this is nothing more than an average shoot 'em up.

61%

TOTAL ECLIPSE TURBO

PRICE: £39.99
BY: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS



Oh no, you're not going to catch me out like that. Just shoving a 'Turbo' on the end won't cover up the fact that this is nothing more than a conversion of that tawdry old 3DO shooter *Total Eclipse*.

Bar its texture mapping, *Total Eclipse* brought nothing new to the genre. In fact, it was almost an embarrassment. It takes a lot of doing to almost totally wipe-out the playability in a shoot 'em up, but that's what's happened here. The aliens just trundle onto the screen in repetitive attack waves, and might as well have 'shoot me, please' signs plastered over their ships they seem to desperate to be killed. Not even the power-ups introduce any fun, all they seem to do is give you a wider spread of fire, which makes an easy game even simpler. The only time the going gets tough is during the high-speed tunnel section, which is not so much tough, just near impossible. You see, the whole game jumps up through the gears and goes from tediously slow to ridiculously fast, with no gradual difficulty curve to separate the two. There's only one recommendation *Total Eclipse Turbo* is worthy of – don't waste your cash.

37%

THEME PARK

PRICE: £44.99
BY: BULLFROG



This game has done the rounds on almost every format known to man bar Top Trumps. Which is no bad thing considering just how fun and playable it is. The object is to simply build a thriving, profitable theme park, which is a tricky business. There's a fine line between Alton Towers and Euro Disney when it comes to pulling people in from miles around and almost going belly-up in your first year. In this case it's essential to design the best rides and get all the management side sussed to you actually end up in profit. Like all good strategy games, there's a wealth of options and different approaches you can utilise. You can even create *Theme Park* hell with broken-down exploding rides and rollercoasters designed to make snotty little kids throw-up when they get off. The only bad point is that, bar some FMV sequences, this version is practically identical to every other one. It would have been nice to have seen some graphical enhancements for the PlayStation version, although that doesn't really take away from what is a fundamentally excellent game.

85%

ESPN EXTREME GAMES

PRICE: £44.99
BY: SONY



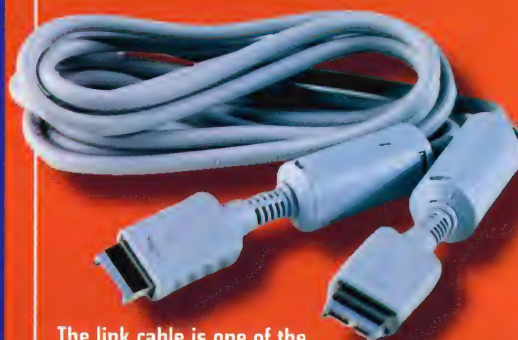
While Electronic Arts are still beaver away on their conversion of *Road Rash* (another 3DO-to-PlayStation port), Sony have pipped them to the post with this excellent piece of high-velocity street racing.

Like *Road Rash* it's a 3D race game set across a variety of landscapes, only where EA's game gave you motorbikes, *Extreme Games* gives you rollerblades, mountain bikes, skateboards and a rather odd wheeled tea-tray called the street luge. The aim is, with your chosen mode of transport, to hair along a near-fatal speeds against a horde of similarly street-wise opponents racing and rucking your way to the front. The combination of speed, skill and fighting moves is made even better by the superb graphics and presentation. On top of that there's a split-screen two-player mode offers the same excellent gameplay which is made even better as you punch the hell out of your mate.

90%

LINK CABLE

PRICE: £19.99
BY: SONY



The link cable is one of the most eagerly awaited PlayStation peripherals. For a meagre £20, this baby links two PlayStations allowing multi-player game marathons on *WipeOut*, *Doom* et al. This double-ended wonder cable will change your gaming life forever, breathing new life into those oh-so-stale one-player yawn-fests.

Measuring in at just under two metres, the link cable plugs into the serial I/O port on the back of each PlayStation. However, in addition to a pair of PlayStations, you'll also need two copies of the game and of course two televisions – a expensive optional extra admittedly, but one worth investing in. You'll need someone else to play against too, so persuading your best mate to fork out for a PlayStation and *Doom* is a more reasonable alternative – for you at least. Maybe offering to pay for half of the link cable will help sweeten them up.

At the moment there are just a handful of titles that support the link option although there are more on the horizon. Namco's stunning *Ridge Racer Revolution* boasts an excellent two-player option, as does Interplay's forthcoming spaceship blaster, *Descent*. For the time being you're limited to *Doom*, *WipeOut*, *Destruction Derby*, and *Assault Rigs*, but do they actually warrant the cable's £25 price tag?

DOOM

Without the link-up option *Doom* could almost be just another shoot 'em up. Having fragged Satan's charred arse and explored every hidden nook



and cranny, there's little else to do in the depths of Hell. Plugging in the sacred link cable opens a portal to a new dimension, leading to a world where double-barrelled shotguns are freely available and mass murders are an everyday occurrence. Welcome to Deathmatch. Here, two players can compete either against each other or tackle any of the 54 levels as a co-operative team. While the latter is entertaining enough it's Deathmatch that provides the thrills and (blood) spills of multi-player *Doom*. The concept is simple – both players are placed at random positions in the level and are given a pistol with a handful of bullets. Then it's just a case of locating your opponent and filling them with lead. Naturally the inclusion of larger weapons like the shotgun, rocket launcher and ultimately the BFG spices things up a little, but first you have to find them.

Quite simply *Doom* is the game the link-up cable was made for. Although only two players can compete simultaneously (as opposed to the PC's four) it's still the most fun you can have with a pair of PlayStations.

★★★★★

NEGCON JOYPAD

PRICE: £44.99
BY: NAMCO

Namco's joypad offering is rather unique. Designed primarily for use with *Ridge Racer*, the NegCon is an analogue joypad that is endowed with the usual Dpad and button configuration.

However, it is split into two halves and twists along the centre of the pad. Although useless for most games, load up *WipeOut* and instead of using the Dpad to steer, simply rotate the pad to turn left and right. A novel feature admittedly, but one which is rather useless.



RIDGE RACER

Out of the three games on test the NegCon worked best with *Ridge Racer* – hardly surprising considering they were developed in conjunction with one another. Although initially difficult to get to grips with, driving with the NegCon is fairly easy and it actually feels quite natural twisting the pad to power-slide around corners. It's occasionally difficult to straighten up after steering, though.

★★★★☆

WIPEOUT

Controlling your craft with the NegCon is very difficult indeed. Firstly the layout of the buttons makes it almost impossible to accelerate and fire weapons at the same time without straining a muscle. Secondly the pad doesn't offer the level of sensitivity needed to successfully negotiate the harder courses as you have to vigorously wrench the joypad just to slide around the slightest bend.

★★★★☆

DESTRUCTION DERBY

Due to the explosive nature of *Destruction Derby* you really need to be able to throw your car from side to side. Because the pad must be twisted through 180° to pull off a fairly tight turn it's difficult and physically straining (honestly!) to actually complete a racing season. Again, finding the straight line proves tricky after cornering.

★★★★☆

OVERALL

The NegCon doesn't offer any real advantages over the normal joypad. It doesn't offer the degree of sensitivity needed for most racers and therefore makes difficult driving games like *WipeOut* even harder. It's not particularly durable either. Therefore the pad's potentiometer (the gadget that determines how tight you're turning) begins to wear after extensive use, so when you level out to drive in a straight line the car begins to drift to one side.

★★★★☆

DESTRUCTION DERBY

It's always more fun taking out your aggression on a human opponent rather than a computer drone — that's what makes link-up *Destruction Derby* so appealing. However, having the desire to shunt your opponent into the wall and actually managing it are two different things entirely. With a total of 20 cars swarming around the arena bowl, singling out the other human driver is almost impossible. You may be able to get them with the occasional ram but most of your time is spent avoiding the drone vehicles. This proves less of a problem in the actual stock car race, especially if both drivers are equally skilled and can speed ahead of the pack. This allows both players concentrate on each other without the hassle of the other cars, which is ultimately more satisfying. However, with rumours abound that there will soon be an adaptor that will allow up to 20 drivers to compete simultaneously, *Destruction Derby* with just two players seems a little dull.

★★★★☆



WIPEOUT

WipeOut is still one of the PlayStation's premier titles, proving what Sony's super console is capable of. While it excels as a one-player racer it's even better with two machines linked together. The standard two-player race allows drivers to compete against each other and six CPU-controlled craft, across each of the circuits in either Venom or Rapier class. The added challenge of computer cars is eliminated in the head-to-head race, with players competing solely against each other one-on-one.

Like virtually every other multi-player game, racing against a skilled human opponent is more challenging and indeed more exciting than facing drone cars. You'll find yourself gunning for your opponent rather than aiming to win the race, saving that precious homing missile for when the other racer finally slips into your sights. The link-up game offers two extra bonuses too. The Revcon icon temporarily reverses the controls of your opponent's ship while the smiley face deactivates all bonus pads, preventing the opposition from grabbing any power-ups or weapon pods.

Two-player *WipeOut* is arcade racing at its very best, towering over its lesser cousin *Destruction Derby*. However, Namco promises to threaten *WipeOut*'s well-deserved domination when *Ridge Racer Revolution* is released next year, complete with multi-player option.

★★★★★



DISC WORLD

PRICE: £39.99

BY: SIE



For some strange reason, there are almost no adventure games to be found on any console. And while *Discworld* isn't exactly a shining example of the genre, let's hope that it prompts a few companies to start taking consoles and adventures seriously.

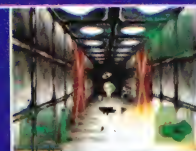
The game's based around Terry Pratchett's hugely popular *Discworld* books, which are a strange combination of Tolkien-esque fantasy and out-and-out British comedy. Converting this humour must have been the biggest headache for the game's programmers. Rather than rely on visual gags, they've drafted in voice talent from the likes of Tony Robinson and Jon Pertwee to help bring the characters to life. Unfortunately it seems as though they've got a little carried away as you end up spending more time listening to conversations that actually playing the game. If you can ignore that, what you find is a more than competent adventure that's packed with puzzles and is also big enough to keep you going for quite some time. Compared to the kind of adventures produced by companies such as LucasArts, this isn't anywhere near the top-grade, but at the moment you really don't have much of a choice.

71%

KILEAK THE BLOOD

PRICE: £39.99

BY: SONY



Back in the days before *Doom* life was much simpler. Everything was in black and white and when somebody copied a shoot 'em up it was simply a case of coming up with a better vertical scrolling routine. But life's a lot more complicated these days, and when someone tries to rip off the greatest shooter around, *Doom*, they more often than not end up with something like this — and fall hugely wide of the mark.

Kileak was the first such attempt at a 3D *Doom*-style game on the PlayStation. The demons have been replaced by robots, but such familiar features as side-stepping and ambushes are all in there. What it doesn't have is atmosphere or pace. The game plods along fairly sedately and never gets into gear. The robots you face are a fairly insular lot who seem to prefer their own company and rarely attack in anything more than a trio. You can't even place this in the 'nice-try' category. Still, who needs imitations when you can now get your hand on the real *Doom*?

52%

MORTAL KOMBAT III

PRICE: £49.99

BY: SONY



Midway's third instalment in their infamous beat 'em up series arrives for the PlayStation in a conversion virtually identical to the coin-op. If you've been living with your head in the sand for the last three years, the *Mortal Kombat* hype may have missed you. Basically, *Mortal Kombat III* is another in the long line of side-viewed one on one beat 'em ups. Having selected one of fifteen characters, the action then follows as a series of best of three rounds, with the player ultimately facing off against a rock-hard bast called Shao Kahn. What separates *Mortal Kombat III* from the likes of *Street Fighter: The Movie* and its kin, though, is that *MK* is fast, furious and contains a host of secret characters and gore moves which extend its lasting appeal massively. The second greatest beat 'em up for the Sony machine. For now at least.

90%

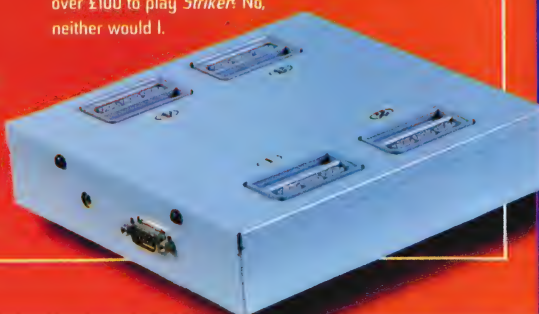
MULTI-TAP

PRICE: £78

BY: VARIOUS

The multi-tap is essentially a joypad four-way. Plugging into joypad slot 1, up to four additional pads can be connected to the multi-tap for use with games like *NBA Jam TE* and *Striker '96*. Therefore a total of four gamers can play simultaneously, which is actually quite good fun. But there is a downside. As well as paying out for the multi-tap you'll need an extra three joypads — that's

another £75. So the ultimate question is would you pay over £100 to play *Striker*? No, neither would I.



3D LEMMINGS

PRICE: £39.99

BY: SIE



Arguably one of the most popular 16-bit games of all time, SIE chose to introduce *Lemmings* to the PlayStation in a radically revamped 3D version. Whereas the Amiga original was viewed from the side and afar, *3D Lemmings* was just that: it could be viewed from any angle at any time. Sadly, adding such an idea to what is basically a very playable game with no need for thrills, over-egged the pudding and *3D Lemmings* is a bit of a mess. The basic aim of the game is to steer dozens of lemmings to safety, using an icon system to effect special abilities which include climbing, parachuting or blocking the way. The basic idea is sound enough (the reason why so many Amiga owners remember *Lemmings* with such misty-eyed affection), but the views are pointless and whizzing around the play area while your lemmings pootle along is often confusing and irritating. Stick to a distant view, though and the basic game is playable enough, but why put the zoom mode there in the first place?

81%

STREET FIGHTER: THE MOVIE

PRICE: £39.99

BY: ACCLAIM



Let's face it, the film was a bad idea in the first place. With the *Super Mario* film a resounding flop, it seemed the only thing that could make a movie based on the *Street Fighter* series of games worthwhile was the addition of Jean-Claude Van Damme. Still hardly enough to make people unfamiliar with the game rush out and see it, though. Thus, unsurprisingly, the film was as crap as expected, but what nobody had foreseen was the clunker of a game that followed. Rumours that all the stars had been sub-contracted to perform special moves in front of a blue-screen backdrop were rife during the film's production, but the thought of kicking the crap out of Kylie was all too much to bear. The first third-party title for the PlayStation, *Street Fighter: The Movie* is an awful beat 'em up with very few redeeming factors. It's a blatant rip off of the *Mortal Kombat* series with the old cartoon sprites replaced by the said digitised actors, but its slow, repetitive and has none of the finesse of *MKIII*. Not the most inspiring addition to the Sony fold, but at least lives up to the standards of the film. Then again, that's no recommendation...

67%

STARBLADE ALPHA

PRICE: £39.99

BY: NAMCO



While Namco are the proud father of two of the greatest PlayStation games to date in the shape of *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken*, they also have a few skeletons in their closet — *Starblade Alpha* being one. A technical masterpiece, *Starblade Alpha* is a massive space battle which drops the player into an alien craft, leaving them to blow the crap out of numerous enemy ships before swooping into the larger bases and blowing an extra seven shades out of those, too. Sounds great, doesn't it? One man against all the odds and all that. Except the interaction in *Starblade* is so minimal, the player's role is to simply use a cross hair sight to pinpoint and then blow away anything which trundles on screen. All the controls over your ship are pre-set, and as impressive as the dazzling panoramic views are, it's a bit tossy that you don't have control. Granted, this is a fault held over from the coin-op *Starblade* is converted from, but that's crap, too, so no excuses. Even the addition of a graphically-enhanced version cannot save this one from game hell.

43%

Joypads

SONY PLAYSTATION PAD



PRICE: £24.99
BY: SONY

TEKKEN

Very good. Combo attacks and special moves can be pulled off with ease and both the Dpad and buttons are responsive and durable. However, the pad does become increasingly uncomfortable to use after prolonged periods, especially the Dpad.

★★★★☆

HYPER JOYPAD



PRICE: £24.99
BY: FIRE INT.

The limp Dpad is the cause of much frustration in *Tekken*, often initiating jumps when you're trying to pull off combos or special moves. Although the joypad's slow-motion button works it's pretty useless really, as is the turbo button.

★★★★☆

PLAYSTATION PAD



PRICE: £24.99
BY: FIRE INT.

Getting used to this pad takes some time — it's shaped more like a Saturn pad and is more suited to gamers who play with their fingers rather than thumbs. Combos are easy to string together and it's comfortable to use, although the buttons are a bit loose.

★★★★☆

PS PROPAD



PRICE: £29.99
BY: SPECTRA VIDEO

Hmm, not bad. Moves are easy to pull off although the space between the direction on the Dpads is slightly too large and therefore could prove uncomfortable for marathon games. The three-speed slow motion is occasionally handy but the auto-fire is fairly redundant.

★★★★☆

PS GAMEPAD 8



PRICE: £24.99
BY: SPECTRA VIDEO

This performs identically to the PS Propad and therefore suffers from the same problems, namely the gaps between the Dpad 'pointers' being slightly too large. Therefore you're likely to suffer from 'joypad thumb' if you play with this pad for too long.

★★★★☆

PSX II PAD



PRICE: £24.99
BY: LMP

The Dpad is solid but the raised corner edges are a bit uncomfortable, especially if you're trying to execute special moves. The auto-fire and slow-mo buttons offer no real bonus but otherwise a pretty good performer.

★★★★☆

THE RAIDEN PROJECT

The PlayStation pad is perfect for *Raiden*. The Dpad offers pixel-perfect control over your ship and although there's no auto-fire switch, simply holding down fire unleashes a stream of photon death. An outstanding performer.

★★★★★

The turbo button is completely wasted because the game features one anyway, and although the slow motion switch does reduce the speed of the game considerably, it also corrupts the music and sound effects. Other than that the pad is okay.

★★★★☆

Generally the pad performed well with the Dpad proving comfortable even after prolonged use. Again the loose fire buttons are little annoying, although the position of the second button makes it slightly easier to drop smart bombs.

★★★★☆

Unsurprisingly the pad performed well here. The controls are responsive and everything works as it should. The rapid fire option is of no use whatsoever but the slow motion is actually quite handy on the tougher levels. Overall, not a bad pad at all.

★★★★★

Again, not much difference between this and Spectra Video's other PS pad. Offering responsive Dpad and button control, you can't really go wrong with such a simple shoot 'em up. As ever, the auto-fire button is pretty much pointless.

★★★★★

A simple game to test the pad on admittedly, and not surprisingly the PSX II performed admirably. The Dpad is a bit flimsy but the buttons are responsive making this a good, sturdy alternative to the official pad.

★★★★★

DOOM

The neat joystick layout makes *Doom* extremely easy play. Side-stepping with the L and R keys is instinctive and button configuration allows you to run and fire with ease. An absolute dream.

★★★★★

There's an underlying fault with this pad. L1 (which should side-step) is in fact L2, so rather than strafing you'll simply switch between weapons. Oddly, R1 remains the same as before so total control over your trooper is no longer second nature or particularly easy. Disappointing.

★★★★☆

Not the best pad for *Doom*, mainly because the side-step and weapon select buttons are no longer on the top of the pad but instead have moved to the main six button area. Therefore you can no longer instinctively dodge or strafe, which makes the game much tougher to play.

★★★★☆

Excellent. Because the ProPad's layout is essentially the same as Sony's PlayStation joystick is handles just as well. Once again the special joystick features are practically useless but they're not really needed anyway.

★★★★★

Very little to criticise here. The pad feels comfortable, it offers perfect control over your soldier and all the buttons are within easy reach. What more could you possibly want?

★★★★★

Oh dear. Because both pairs of top finger buttons are needed the odd position of the finger grips means the pad doesn't fit snugly in your palms. This obviously means it's uncomfortable to use over long periods of time. A shame, really.

★★★★☆

OVERALL

Excellent. The original and still the best pad, proving both comfortable and durable over extended periods of use. Unless you're desperate for a pad with either a turbo and slow-motion switch I suggest you stick with this.

★★★★★

Almost identical in design to the Sony's official pad, the Hyper Joypad feels comfortable although it doesn't actually perform that well. The Dpad is unresponsive and limp, and the buttons are tacky and 'squashy'. Not the worst pad available but by no means the best.

★★★★☆

Although this odd-shaped pad is a far cry from the standard PlayStation joystick it actually performs very well. Both the Dpad and buttons are sturdy, but games that use the L1 and 2 finger buttons could suffer from the pad's alternative design.

★★★★☆

This is one of the best unofficial pads available and performs almost as well as the official Sony pad. Apart from the contoured grips, which are just a little uncomfortable, and the Dpad direction being a bit too far apart, this pad is outstanding.

★★★★★

The PS Game Pad 8 is a cheaper alternative to the PS Propad, and while it doesn't have quite so many auto-fire and slow-motion options (the Game Pad 8 has one slow speed rather than three) it still just as good. It's five quid cheaper, too.

★★★★★

I actually think the PSX II is a good pad marred only by a couple of minor gripes. The finger grips can be uncomfortable and the Dpad corners are a bit sharp, but otherwise its durable construction and array of special modes makes this a pad worth looking at.

★★★★★

WWF WRESTLEMANIA

PRICE: £39.99

BY: ACCLAIM



All the glitz and glamour of America's WWF circuit hit the PlayStation in a supremely playable conversion of Midway's coin-op. Exaggerating the OTT nature of the real thing, Acclaim's Sony vision of the WWF scene adds special moves galore and strange goings-on to the basic tusslin' action. As such, in addition to the expected kicks, slaps and pin-downs, the eight characters manage to fry their opponents with new-found fireball techniques or unleash a horde of bats to peck out their eyes. Lovely. Similarly, most unlike the real thing is the addition of baseball bats and other such hefty objects used to loosen an opponent's head. The reason for *WWF Wrestlemania's* success is that, quite simply, it's fun. The moves are a doddle to pull off and plentiful in number, and if you've ever wanted to throw someone into the ropes and kick as they bounce back, it's all here. It's by no means a rival to *Tekken* or *Mortal Kombat III*, but this'll be the one your beered-up mates will want to play.

83%

RAYMAN

PRICE: £39.99

BY: UBI SOFT



Congratulations on buying a PlayStation. For your £300 you are entitled to a fair share of games other systems could never handle. As such, enjoy *WipeOut*, *Tekken*, and *Viewpoint*, but whatever you do keep well away from *Rayman*. We're in a bit of a minority as far as UBI Soft's platformer goes. It has garnered review scores well into the 90s, but it totally escapes us why. Basically, *Rayman* is a platform game you could have expected on your Super NES or Megadrive two years ago. Granted, it would be passable if — like *WWF* — it was extremely playable, but at best *Rayman* is frustrating, and at worst it is the most sodding infuriating game for ages. While we'll concede it is a stunning-looking game (full of large sprites and an abundance of colour), it has so many fundamental flaws which soon relegates it to the 'C Division' of Sony titles. The enemy characters prove extremely hard to avoid at times, pixel-perfect positioning is nearly always required, and despite the number of levels they are all along similar patterns, with boredom soon following. If looks could kill, *Rayman* would be in the same cell as Charles Manson, but it should be jailed for its crimes to playability, and the only murderous looks it can expect in the future will be from the player.

59%

RAPID RELOAD

PRICE: £39.99

BY: SONY



Rapid Reload is a mixture of shoot 'em ups styles with one or two players stepping into the oversized boots of male and female Manga soldiers of fortune. Armed to the teeth with lasers, bullets, smart bombs and the like, the basic aim is to yomp from one side of the horizontally-scrolling play area to the other, blowing up anything moving or static. Extra power-ups line the route to a huge boss creature at the end of the stage, wherein there's a pitched battle as to who whittles away the other's energy first. This pattern then repeats across jungle, warehouse and muddy levels. That's the basics of what is a very nice looking but ultimately rather average blaster. While *Rapid Reload* is fun enough to pick up and mess about with, constant play reveals several shortcomings. Its difficulty level varies from a walk in the park to nigh-on impossible which is just ridiculous, and for a three-month old game this is shockingly dated.

75%

JUMPING FLASH
PRICE: £44.99
BY: SONY



In what is quite simply one of the greatest games to grace the PlayStation, Sony's Japanese bods have taken the platform game and turned it on its head — literally. *Jumping Flash* stars a bio-mechanical rabbit who (logically enough) scours a series of worlds in search of carrots. Numerous robotic foes are after a piece of the bunny's cotton tail, though, ensuring that the collection of orange root vegetables is no walk in the park. What makes *Flash* so different is that, rather than seeing the action from the customary viewpoint, with all the characters skipping about before your very eyes, everything in *JF's* world is seen through the eyes of the rabbit. As such, when leaping in the air, the entire polygon landscape is updated to create the impression of a jump — and if you look below as you land we defy you not to groan in awe and queasiness. The novelty of this unique view is backed up by intelligently-designed levels and a slight puzzle element (the weird views ensure that escape routes aren't always obvious), and end-of-stage bosses which spew forth buckets of firepower as the player pops off the odd missile and bullets in order to weaken them. Sadly, there's a "but." *Jumping Flash's* levels may indeed be a whole new slant on things, but there are very few of them. As such, the game's lasting appeal isn't all it could be, although it is great fun while it lasts.

89%

DOOM
PRICE: £44.99
BY: GT INTERACTIVE



Doom really needs no introduction so why waste precious column inches? It has single-handedly changed the face of video gaming so the chances are you've played an incarnation of id's frag-fest in one form or another. Unsurprisingly the PlayStation version is excellent. Brimming over with 54 levels taken from *The Ultimate Doom* and *Doom II*, it's packed with a selection of Satan hell-spawn and all eight weapons from both games. Visually little has changed from the PC version. It scrolls smoothly, the texture-mapped objects and complex level design create a believable reality and the smart light-sourcing — a feature unique to the PlayStation game — gives *Doom* a distinctly spooky atmosphere.

The most impressive aspect of the conversion has to be the joypad control system though. Due to it's simplicity and instinctiveness exploring the dungeons and combating the enemy is easy. Strafing soon becomes second nature and you'll find you can run, side-step and switch between weapons without even pausing for thought. PlayStation *Doom* even supports Deathmatch and co-operative play in conjunction with the link-up cable, so there's very little negative criticism that can be aimed at this outstanding conversion. The original and still the best.

92%



Win The

The odds of winning the National Lottery are stacked against you, with just a mere 1 in 14 million chance of raking in the jackpot. But who needs the lottery? You've read about all the extra bits and pieces available for the PlayStation, now wouldn't you like to own The Ultimate Games System™? In conjunction with Ocean Software, *PlayStation Plus* gives you the chance to win a one-way ticket to Gaming Heaven, a glorious realm filled with untold wonder. And in one, silver-lined corner of the cloud is your prize. A massive 28" Toshiba Dolby Surround Sound Nicam television (gasp) that you can link to the holiest of next generation consoles, your sacred Sony PlayStation. But that's not all. There are also stacks of other goodies to give away, including *Worms* woolly hats and *The Raiden Project* T-shirts!



IT COULD BE YOU

Winning this giant-sized television treat couldn't be easier. Well, entering couldn't anyway. All you have to do is answer a few multiple choice questions, so if you're ready, here goes...

Question 1: What type of mammal appears on Ocean's logo?

- A: A whale.
- B: A duck-billed platypus.
- C: A dolphin.

Question 2: Name the development team behind the superlative *Worms*.

- A: Heaven 17
- B: Team 17
- C: Flight 17

Question 3: Which tennis star has just launched their own range of underwear?

- A: Boris Becker
- B: Steffi Graf
- C: Bjorn Borg

Question 4: What pop group penned the musical *Tommy*?

- A: The Who
- B: The Beatles
- C: The Kinks

Write your answers on the back of a postcard, not forgetting to include your name and address, and send it to: Ocean Game Heaven competition, *PlayStation Plus*, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU. All entries should be received by January 15th 1996. Usual competition rules apply.

Ultimate PSXtra

Courtesy of

ocean

POWER SERVE

THE GOOD
PSX
GUIDE



LOADED
PRICE: £44.99
BY: GREMLIN
INTERACTIVE



Loaded is a game with attitude. Forget the wide-eyed cuteness of *Rayman* or the fluffy innocence of *Lemmings*, the six psychos in Gremlin's overhead blaster are the very essence of evil. Whether its the nappy-clad fat-boy Mamma or the perfectly petite Vox, every one of them is, in all honesty, a vicious bast. Packing high-calibre revolvers, rapid-fire machines guns and downright massive rocket launchers, they mean business and their business is being mean.

Conceptually *Loaded* is strangely simple. Fire like crazy. And that's about it. It's a refreshingly straightforward shoot 'em up in the vein of *Gauntlet* and *Chaos Engine*, navigating the maze of dimly-lit corridors and blood-stained prison cells looking for coloured keys to access the next area of the game. That's as complex as the puzzles get, and most of the solving is done with your trigger finger. Unfortunately this does make the game a tad repetitive, even in the two-player game. This is partly because there's no real sense of teamwork between players — the game is designed so you don't have to work together to solve puzzles which makes the co-operative game pretty pointless. Admittedly it's fun competing against your team mate to see who can notch up the most kills, but like the game itself this holds only short-term appeal and is ultimately unsatisfying.

75%



ASSAULT RIGS
PRICE: £44.99
BY: SIE



Assault Rigs is a difficult game to summarise. Strapped at the helm of a fully armed-and-armoured tank, you'd be forgiven for thinking this a simple shoot 'em up, a *Battlezone* in three dimensions. Instead it's a little more complex. Okay, so there's a hell of a lot of gun-fire and explosions involved, but the levels are intricately designed and are filled with puzzles, so while some are ridiculously easy, others may take hours to complete. There are loads of power-ups to collect and massive weapons with which to obliterate the enemy, but of course they have come equally prepared with spider droids, homing nukes and loads of other cyborg nasties. While *Assault Rigs* offers frantic blasting gameplay right from the very start, this initial appeal soon wears thin. Exploring tortuous mazes while avoiding streams of laser fire from all sides soon become a chore, and the lack of variety mars what could have been an excellent blast.

81%



PS

FEATURE

NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION

PRICE: £39.99
BY: ACCLAIM



For a sport as popular as a Fred West sleepover party, Basketball came from nowhere as one of the hip fads of last year. Ever present to cash in on such an opportunity, Acclaim were on hand with countless conversions of Midway's *NBA Jam* coin-op and its updated sequel, Tournament Edition. With the hype barely over, Acclaim's second PlayStation release was an arcade perfect conversion of this version with all the cheats, moves and special features of the original transferred to the Sony machine.

Played on a left-to-right scrolling court, *NBA Jam: TE* offers a number of teams in a two-on-two scenario. Having selected a pairing from the NBA duos on offer, the action then transfers to a court littered with power-ups and bonuses which, when mixed with the already frenetic court action, makes for a game ten times as interesting as the real thing. Similarly with a little bit of Midway magic, the players have now evolved into super-beings capable of gravity-defying moves and jumps the Harlem Globetrotters could only dream of. And this is where *NBA Jam* won us over. The mixture of usual blocks, shots and passing with fancy moves and dunks from hell create a supremely playable sports sim, and genuine skill is needed to master the three-pointers and pull off much-needed last-gasp shots. PlayStation owners who feel their machine could do more will be proved right, but *NBA Jam: TE* is extremely playable — if hardly stretching the machine's abilities — and, as such, is worth a look. Oh, and Bill Clinton and a host of secret characters are said to be in there somewhere...

86%



THE RAIDEN PROJECT

PRICE: £39.99
BY: OCEAN



One of the old school of shoot 'em ups, Ocean have bunged both *Raiden* and its sequel on one CD for a double-dose of nostalgic genocide. *Raiden Project* is a spot-on conversion of one of the first vertically-scrolling blasters to enter the arcades, and features the customary end-of-level mother ships and power-ups galore. Sadly, it also features uninspiring and often repetitive gameplay, and slows down when the screen gets busy — hardly the stuff you expect of a state-of-the-art console.

As a trip down memory lane, *Raiden Project* is fine. The weapons on offer are superb — particularly the toothpaste weapon (a concentrated beam of light) *Raiden II* offers — but there's only so many times you'll want to blast away at countless enemy gun turrets before you expect something more for your forty quid. Granted, the two versions of the game do go some way to offering extra value for money, but the second game makes the first seem so basic, it's doubtful you'll return to it very often. Playable, but severely flawed and extremely dated.

72%

MERCHANDISING

PLAYSTATION MERCHANDISING

Not content with blitzing the world with PlayStations, pads and peripherals, Sony also have range of merchandising that will be available shortly. Starting from the bottom of the range, there are a selection of tiny pin-badges and key rings bearing the now-familiar PS logo, as well as mugs and even carriers bags. There are also T-shirts and sweatshirts available, the left breast emblazoned with the Sony emblem and a huge PlayStation logo swamping the back. True, not particularly

fashionable but one for gamenuts nevertheless. Slightly more trendy are rucksacks and record bags. The black record bag is cool, with the PS logo discreetly stitched onto the outside flap. The silver-grey bag isn't quite so classy, with a huge PlayStation badge slapped on the side. Seventies glamour-seeking retroheads will love it though. And so do celebrities, it seems. Even super-cool boxer Prince Hamed Naseem proudly wears a PlayStation tracksuit. Hmm, surely someone with that much money could afford something a little more up-market?



WIPEOUT: THE ALBUM

PRICE: £11.99
BY: SONY MUSIC

This 12-track compilation is a mixed bag of classic club cuts and remixed techno atrocities. Although claiming to be filled with rare and extended remixes, many of the tracks will be strangely familiar. Take two of the albums highlights for example. The Chemical Brothers' *Chemical Beat* has been lifted directly from their debut LP *Exit Planet Dust* while The Prodigy's contribution, *One Love*, is the exact same Narcotic Suite edit that appeared on *Music for the Jilted Generation*. Others peaks include a Jam & Spoon mix of *Age of Love* by Age of Love, Orbital's *WipeOut* and an excellent Dust Brothers remix of the Manic Street Preachers' *La Tristesse Durera*. The rest of the album is a selection of remixed mediocre club tunes, with even the K-Klass mix of Sunscreen's *When Falling* disappointingly short of the mark. A second-rate collection of the good, the bad and the unknown remixes.

★★★★☆



CONTACT NUMBERS

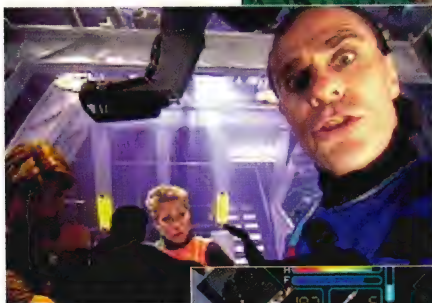
So you've read all about the extra bits and pieces available for the PlayStation, but now you want to know where to get them? Once again *PlayStation Plus* is on hand to help out.

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SPECTRA VIDEO: 0181 902 2211
FIRE INTERNATIONAL: 01302 751428
LMP: 01992 503133

All other extras, including games and joypads, are available from all good computer retailers.

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Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
CONTINUES: PASSWORD
SKILL LEVELS: 3

RELEASE DECEMBER

PRICE £44.99

BY CORE

PLAYERS 1



D games. A dream to some, a nightmare to others. They instantly impress (well, most times anyway)

but scratch away at the often thin and glossy cover and what are you left with? Sadly, seven times out of ten the naked result is a weak racing game or shoot 'em up cleverly disguised as something special. It's almost as though development companies are trying to cash in on our naivete; we rush out to buy the next super-fast scrolling masterpiece before we realise that it's actually pretty easy to do this sort of thing on the PlayStation. Still, there are diamonds to be found in the general slag heap of the genre, and (oh thank you Satan) *Firestorm* is one of them. (And having read the above, I'm sure Core Design are breathing a sigh of relief as we speak!)

There's but one helicopter on offer here (the futuristic AH-73M Thunderhawk Attack Helicopter), but thanks to an excellent control system, it's probably one of the most manoeuvrable craft you'll get to pilot in any of the games around at the moment. You also have a variety of weapons at your command — each one with a unique attribute that makes it the perfect tool for a very specific type of mission. Talking of missions, there are something like 27 on offer, covering the globe and ranging from escort missions, to rescue, to ground assault, to night stealth, to sea attack, to ambush, to... well, anyway, you get the idea.



NASTY POINTED STICKS



You may well own the most funky, spunky attack helicopter in the world, but without some decent weapons you might as well just wear a loud shirt and throw soggy tomatoes. Fortunately, the AH-73M has everything but over-ripe fruit, and using this screen selects the various bombs and missiles you'll take on your next mission.



AGM-214 FIRESTORM HOMING MISSILE

Just point in the right direction, wait for the lock-on, and then fire. It can take a few of these to wipe out major targets, but they're excellent for weakening battle ships or attacks on tightly grouped primary targets. Maximum of 28 missiles available.



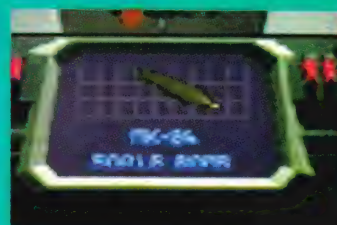
FEAR ROCKET POD

Due to their unguided flight, these are only really effective when close to targets. They do, however, effect rapid damage as they launch two rockets at a time, and are particularly potent when used on groups of buildings and small closely packed ground targets. Maximum of 116 rockets available.



MK-84 500lb BOMB

Drop one of these on the ground and stand back to enjoy the fireworks show. Yep, they don't come more obvious than this. It's a bomb, it obeys the basic laws of gravity, and it doesn't take too kindly to being hit hard on the nose. Maximum of eight bombs available.



LOOK OUT!



This external view is nice and handy for placing bombs, but hardly practical.



We know you love playing with all those lovely views on offer, so how about a nice cockpit view?



One for the experienced, this. The 'Virtual Cockpit' means L1 & R1 allow you to look around and aim your gun from inside the cockpit.



This is the best view as far as I'm concerned. Good visibility, and all the information you could ever want.

COMMENT

STEVE

After the mayhem of Virgin's *Agile Warrior*, Core's attempt at a mix of simulation and shoot 'em up is aimed at those who like thinking about what they're about to destroy. While *Agile* is an all-out blast, genuine consideration and planning is needed for *Firestorm*'s missions, and the plentiful controls over the helicopter mean that veteran pilots will be able to weave and dodge out of battle like Jan-Michael Vincent in an old *Airwolf* episode. *Firestorm* is a superbly plotted game, with varied and (very taxing missions), and the small weapon payload the helicopter can carry means you'll need your wits more than air-to-ground missiles. If there's one complaint to be leveled, it's that some of the missions whizz by, but overall this is an excellent Sony debut for Core Design.

THE AH-73M THUNDERHAWK ATTACK HELICOPTER

Origin: USA.

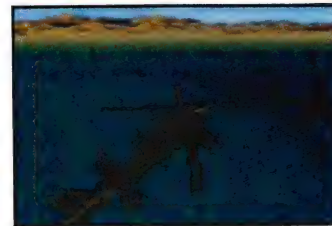
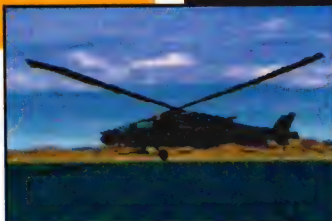
First flight: 8th April, 1998.

Engines: Two 1750 SHP (each) T-800B turboshaft engines, with back-to-base capability with only one engine operational.

Performance: Max. speed, 235 mph. Minimum hover ceiling, 13,500ft. Max. range (own fuel) 500 miles.

Weights: Empty 9,127lbs. Mission weight (gross) 12,048lbs.

Systems: Designed to withstand enemy fire of 12.7mm and 30mm, thereby reducing combat losses due to damage to critical flight components.



INCOMING MESSAGE..

NATO RRHTF ORDERS - F1/99

From: General John T. MacLaine, Supreme Commander NATO

Dateline: 1999. Potential flashpoint situations in all parts of the world have increased to such an extent that NATO has been forced to establish a rapid response, helicopter task force to combat them.

Its code name - FIRESTORM

As FIRESTORM ONE, the lead pilot of this elite force, you must be on twenty-four hour stand-by, ready to fly your AH-73M Thunderhawk attack helicopter on a variety of highly dangerous missions across the globe.

Good luck.



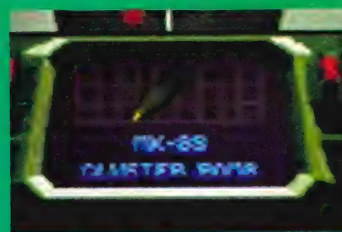
Mac-8874A CLUSTER BOMB

Again, nothing you couldn't have worked out for yourself here. The cluster bomb is particularly effective on the missions that involve destroying tons of tightly grouped storage tanks. Pretty good for road convoys and trains (like here) too. Maximum of 20 bombs available.



MK-3 PENGUIN ANTI-SHIPING MISSILE

This is a powerful missile that's great for approaching the sea-based missions that feature a number of battle ships. The only disadvantage is that you can't carry as many of these as you can the standard Firestorm missiles. Maximum of eight available.



BEEN AROUND THE WORLD

There are eight campaigns to get involved in, and though you can select the campaigns in any order, the numerous missions within that campaign will come at you in a set order. Each campaign has a different 'story' so, while the missions for that location will be different, they'll still be of the same type.

SOUTH AMERICA

Arms Running

Intelligence reports indicate that the Colombian drugs cartels are smuggling in vast quantities of arms at an airstrip in northern Columbia. From a forward command base just over the border of Venezuela, you must co-ordinate your attacks on the arms smuggling operation.

SOUTH AMERICA

Stealth Down

When terrorists of the Red Commando movement took hostage three diplomats from the United States embassy in the Peruvian capital of Lima, a stealth plane was dispatched to pinpoint their whereabouts. This plane was subsequently shot down somewhere over the Cordillera mountain range in eastern Peru. The American hostages have been released, but the stealth pilot is still alive and on the run in Red Commando territory. You must go in there and get him out.

MIDDLE EAST

Oil Dispute

Tension in the Middle East between Iraq and her neighbour, Jordan, reaches a flash-point when Iraqi troops cross the border, heading for the Jordanian capital, Amman. Your primary objective is to assist the Jordanian army in repelling the invasion force.

EASTERN EUROPE

Escort Convoy

Serbian forces have been besieging the town of Zvornik in the former Yugoslavia for the past three months. The people of Zvornik are starving and air convoys are unable to get through to them. You're going to be escorting an 'Aid Without Frontiers' convoy into the town and the only way you can do this is by breaking the siege.



MIDDLE EAST

Recapture territory

History repeats itself when Iraq invades Kuwait. NATO is planning an immediate response with the landing of a task force of British and American marines on Kuwait's gulf coast. Before this can happen, you must assist them by clearing the beach-head of enemy forces.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Recapture Town

The Panamanian dictator, General Hernando Dorada, has attacked the neighbouring country of Costa Rica. His troops have established a bridgehead in the town of San Lorenzo, just over the border. Your job is to assist Costa Rican troops in recapturing the town.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Piracy

The South China Sea has been plagued by pirates for many years. Hiding out on the hundreds of tiny islands comprising the Philippines archipelago, they are consequently very difficult to track down. One particular band of pirates, known as the 'Black Skull Gang', has been attacking passenger ships travelling from Malaysia to the Philippine capital, Manila. In the past three months they have attacked no less than twenty-four ships and murdered fifteen people. It's your job to put a stop to their murderous exploits.

PANAMA CANAL

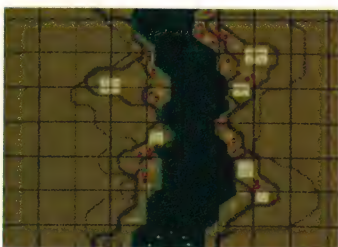
Canal Crisis

The democratically elected government has been brutally overthrown by a military junta under the command of General Hernando Dorada. Since then, the Panama canal — the main shipping lane between the Pacific and the Caribbean — has been under blockade. Your mission is to break the blockade and free the shipping lane.

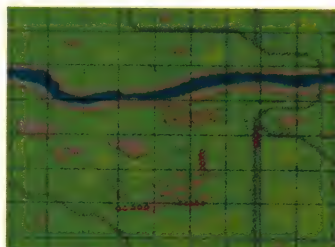


CONVOY! TRUCKING ON THROUGH THE NIGHT

There are two types of convoy to be found in *Firestorm*; a friendly escort to be led by yourself through enemy land, and enemy convoys to be taken out.



This mission map shows one of the more simple convoys. Here the blue dots show friendly ships that must be led up a narrow stretch of river, with enemy guns and tanks waiting in ambush along the banks.



This map shows four enemy truck convoys which must be stopped before they cross the border to the north of the map. The landscape is covered in enemy units, and there are tons of enemy helicopters and jets to deal with too.



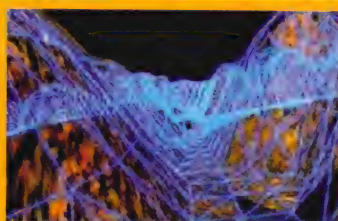
Thanks again to my intelligent compass, finding the first convoy is easy, and being as they're only supply trucks, a few rounds from the front cannon should see them out of the way.



The second convoy is a different matter, with a line of enemy tanks offering more resistance. Yellow chicken time I think. Let's just sit back and let the homing missiles do their thing.

CORE BLIMEY!

Firestorm's intro sequence has to be seen to be believed. Here, have a few static shots that don't do it justice.



MY FRIEND DOESN'T LIKE YOU

To suggest that the enemy is out to get you is a slight understatement. Come with me now, as I take a quick stroll through 'Buggers' Gallery'.



DEATH!

You want death? You got it mate! Here's one of my very own death spirals for your amusement, and yes, I did do it on purpose just for the screen shot. Er... honest!



Enemy chopper at twelve o'clock. And half past, ten to one, half three, and... well they're bloody everywhere! Nothing a quick burst on the gun won't sort out though.



Enemy Chopper's brother, this. Looks different, isn't as strong, but is just as bloody annoying.



Not exactly the largest threat you'll meet, but leave them alone long enough and they'll whittle away at your armour.



These are generally more threatening to convey under your watch, but they can pack a punch should you place your arse over their turrets. So don't do it!



These patrol boats are fairly hardy and can absorb a few Firestorm missiles before cashing in. Best to sweep past with guns a'blazing.



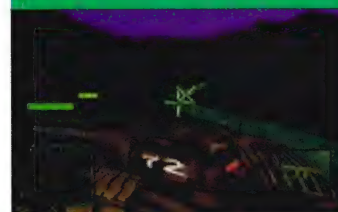
Blummy lummy! These are gits of the first order. Take out the numerous guns and launchers and then go for the belly. Not an easy target.



Always present, always a right sod to get without copping a right old trunk-full. Try to avoid attacking it straight on, instead circling it as it tries to lock-on.



Tons and tons of tanks sit all over the place, just amusing themselves by nibbling chunks off your armour. KILL THEM. KILL THEM ALL!



Oo-er! Perhaps I'm a bit too close to this particular target. Still, at least I won't miss from this range (I just hope he doesn't turn round before I toast him).



Yes they look a bit thin, but get rid of these as soon as possible as they usually surround important ground targets and enemy bases in a protecting way.



WAITER, WAITER, THERE'S A MINE IN MY SOUP



Now this looks interesting. I've got to escort five friendly ships alone this river, but someone appears to have filled it with caviar. Hmm, further investigation called for here, methinks.



Egad! Tons of mines have been laid, and I've only got a few seconds before my mates come through here. Time for a bit of target practice — which would not be so bad if only I wasn't continuously being shot at from enemy on the banks.

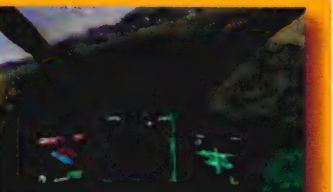
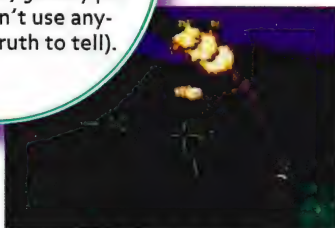


Arse! Oh dear, things didn't go too well there. All of the allied ships got blow out of the water, and as it was my last demerit, I'm grounded. D'oh! Thank God for the password system.



KERBOOM!

One thing most definitely not missing from *Firestorm* is a host of superb explosions. Here are but a few of my personal favourites (well, groovy pictures I couldn't use anywhere else, truth to tell).



Back at base my points are totalled up. I've been awarded a Purple Heart, and a couple of stars (that I'm not too sure about) in recognition of my career so far.



THE TRAIN ON PLATFORM 4...



A quick glance at the mission map shows a large enemy target which must not be allowed to get off the east side of the map.



Follow the red bar on the compass (that always points to the nearest primary target) and there it is. A long train, defenceless apart from the accompanying helicopters and escorting tanks. Pah! No problem for Matt 'Airwolf' Broughton!



The best technique here is to fly to the back and then work along the train using guns or missiles. The carriages are pretty weak in honesty, so you may as well stick to standard ammo.



And with all the carriages destroyed, it just remains to catch up with the engine and with one last spurt from the cannons... the mission's complete! Hurrah for me!

COMMENT

MATT

Hurrah! An absolutely excellent

game, and probably the most rewarding of all the strategy/arcade games currently on offer. Thanks to the design of the missions, you can't just go steaming into each scenario in the way that you could with *Agile Warrior* or *Warhawk*, but instead need to plan your route and take things slowly. Though I've just mentioned this as a positive, it can work against the gameplay, and perhaps it would have been nice to be able to rearm or replenish the armour every now and then. It might encourage the player to have a bit more 'reckless fun'. The controls are tough to get used to initially, but after that, it works a dream. The graphics are speedy, the update is pretty tasty, and overall, the graphics are splendid. The variety in mission types adds variety, and thanks to the difficulty levels, the longevity looks pretty good too. If there's one downer, it's that, by just flying straight to the primary targets and ignoring everything else, you can pretty much complete most missions without breaking a sweat. Still, good stuff.

RATING

GRAPHICS	86
ANIMATION	85
SOUND FX	86
MUSIC	86
LASTABILITY	85
PLAYABILITY	88
OVERALL	86

86



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CONTINUOUS: PASSWORD
SKILL LEVELS: 3

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BY INTERPLAY

PLAYERS 1-2



Damn, a perfectly decent pair of £80 Caterpillar boots ruined in seconds. Most things can be brushed off when they dry but vomit stains like hell, leaving an unsightly white crusty mark even if you wipe it off while it's still warm. God knows why it happened though. Maybe it was something I ate? Nah. It could be the 10 pints of Tennents Extra getting their own back? Possibly. Personally I reckon it's this god-forsaken game. I get queasy riding the Waltzer for chrissakes, so what happens after playing *Descent* for a few minutes? Last night's kebab spurts from my mouth, leaving a putrid trail of gobby mucus and carrot chunks down the front of my slacks. Ergh. Motion sickness is a bad thing. I can play *Ridge Racer* for hours on end without any side effects (apart from being a social outcast, of course) but flying through the twisting tunnels of *Descent* turns my stomach. Skimming upside down along mine shafts is incredibly disorientating when you're used to the relatively flat landscapes of *Doom*, especially when you're under attack from literally every direction. Aliens, eh? Never satisfied with living a peaceful life on Mars, they are always invading our home-world. This time they've picked the mines of the Post Terran Mineral Corporation, shacking up in the darkest shafts of over 30 small moons dotted throughout the star system. Of course, you're the poor sod who's got to flush them out, but first I'd stop off at the dry cleaners — maybe they can shift that darn sick stain.



Descent



SO THE STORY BEGINS

Flicking across to the star chart, your ship engages autopilot and homes in on the next mining colony.



During hyperspace you're briefed on the mission ahead — destroy the reactor and escape before it goes nuclear.

Forget about destroying the reactor for a few seconds, stop to rescue the scientists stranded in the brig.



Not far to go now. Before you destroy the reactor you need to plan an escape route. There's the exit, so the reactor should be close by.

POWER SURGE

PlayStation Plus delves deep into the bonus pick 'n' mix trough and pulls out a handful of indispensable goodies. Tuck into this little lot...

SHIELD TOP UP



LASER TOP-UP



INVINCIBILITY



EXTRA LIFE



COLOURED KEY



VULCAN AMMO



THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

Descent is another game that uses the PlayStation's superb light-sourcing capabilities to great effect. Many of the mine shafts are cast in shadow, the only source of illumination coming from your laser blasts which glow as they streak towards their target. The skimmer is also equipped with flares that, when launched, dig into the wall and burn, thus lighting the area for a few seconds. These are indispensable later in the game, revealing the position of enemy aliens lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce.



COMMENT

MATT

This is excellent! Even if there weren't tons of enemies to kill and levels to complete, *Descent* would still be superb to play, if only to experience the stomach-churning disorientation when flying upside-down – not that you generally know which way is up!

The controls take a little getting used to, but once you're in charge, the game opens up; with pace and excitement present from the word go. There are no 'baby' levels to ease you into the swing of things; you just get chucked in the deep end and have to survive or start again! Ultimately, *Descent* is another *Doom*; with coloured key cards to collect and tons of nasty aliens trying to stop you. Where *Descent* is unique, however, is the way in which each level has been designed. Just when you think you've explored a room fully, you remember to look up, and there's a tunnel leading into yet another section. Your brain just has to re-adjust itself and prepare to move on. And the icing on the cake... those graphics! Wow! It took me about an hour to complete the first level – not because it was tough, but because I just enjoyed looking down each tunnel and watching as my lasers lit the way. The way colours collide and mix is incredible to see, and the speed of the 3D environment is a delight to behold. The game design also deserves credit for making you explore and search just enough to keep things compulsive without being boring (ie not *Defcon 5*). This is very easily the best game of its kind to appear on the PlayStation, and should take pride of place on your shelf next to *Doom*. Awesome!



Slipping into the tiny cockpit of the skimmer, you enter the maze-like mining complex on the lunar complex MN0012.



Ohmigod, it's an ambush! Within seconds the aliens attack, showering the skimmer in a hail of fireballs.



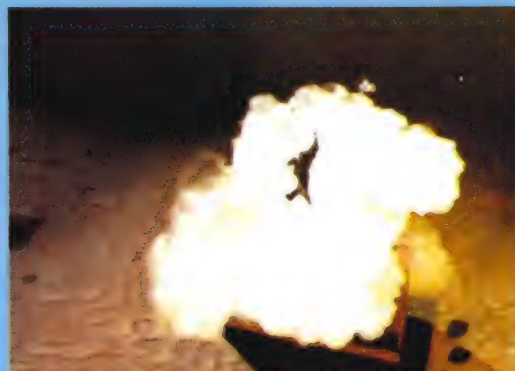
Phew. Having just made through the initial on-slaught you locate the red key. Now all you've got to do is find the red door!



As soon as you fly into view, the automatic defence system kicks in spitting out fireballs in all directions.



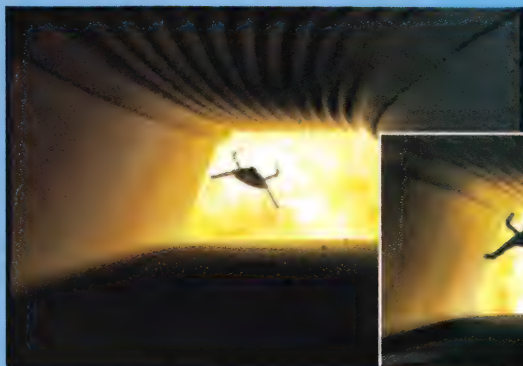
But it's not enough. Your missile's cracked through the reactor's armoured shell, starting a nuclear meltdown. Get out!



That was close but you made it out just in time! But don't get too smug because the next mission is just a few seconds away.

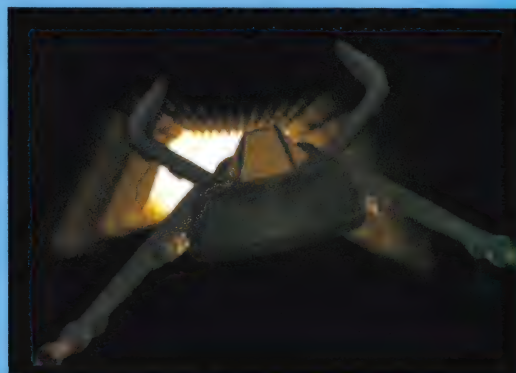
THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM

Death has a thousand faces and unfortunately they're all staring at you. The opening stages are plagued by drone ships which are both poorly armed and unintelligent, but by the time you reach the second moon base the aliens get distinctly harder. Although not quite up to MENSEA standards, they'll dodge incoming fire and attack with more powerful weapons including rapid-firing laser cannons and rocket launchers. The Lifter droids hack at your ship with huge claws and are therefore prone to ranged attacks, while the Mining robot is armed with a colossal minigun that'll tear through your armour like a hot knife through butter. Avoid!



YAHOO!

Successfully destroy the reactor, escape from the mining complex and you're treated to a gorgeous cut-scene. Sit back and relax, hotspot...



JOIN ME

Link a pair of PlayStations together and two players can fight it out death-match-style. Each ship begins with the bare essentials – the standard laser blaster and fully charged shields. It's then a desperate race for the biggest weapon you can find and then using it to nuke your opponent. Sadly, when killed all weapons and missiles are lost, floating on the exact spot where you were fragged until collected, either by you or your opponent.



BLOW 'EM AWAY

Outwitting the alien enemy with extravagant battle plans will often lead to the demise of the otherworld slime, but there's still no match for a decent blaster at your side. Good job then that your skimmer is endowed with the meatiest weapons the 22nd century can offer.



LASER BLASTER

It's not particularly powerful but the laser blaster is all you've got until you can grab something better.



QUAD LASER

Strap this odd-shaped drain-pipe thingy to your cannons and some awesome four-way fire is yours.



VULCAN CANNON

Although the vulcan cannon is effective in close-range combat, it eats through ammunition like there's no tomorrow.



HOMING MISSILE

Lock-on with this meaty fire-and-forget heat-seeking missile and the enemy can just kiss their ass goodbye.



SPAGHETTI JUNCTION

Yeah, saving the human race is tough, that's why you do it. Besides, it pays a whole lot better than being a shelf-stacker at Safeways. It gets easier with experience though, and familiarising yourself with the layout of each mine could mean the difference between life and death. The 3D Automap details every location you've visited, highlighting the coloured coded doors and any refuelling stations located on the level. Unfortunately it's quite complex to understand and you'll probably spend more time trying to make sense of the mess of corridors than actually exploring them!



CONCUSSION ROCKETS

The concussion rockets are best saved for stationary targets like the nuclear reactor at the end of each level.



SPREADFIRE CANNON

The spreadfire cannon covers a wide arc and is therefore excellent for taking out tight groups of enemies.



PROXIMITY MINE

The proximity bombs are lethal and therefore dangerous to use. Drop one of these then run like crazy!

COMMENT

ALEX

Descent was cool on the PC and

thankfully it's just as smart on the PlayStation. Packing the same 30 missions, *Descent* is a challenging game. It's will grip you right from the start and because the game is filled with variety, both in the enemies that attack and the weapons bonuses available, you'll be clinging to the joypad until the bitter end. There's also the link-up option which is, in my opinion, always a welcomed addition. In terms of presentation *Descent* is spot on. The alien robots are detailed and varied, the levels are atmospheric thanks to good use of light-sourcing and the scrolling is generally smooth. The game chugs a little when the action becomes intense, but it really is a rare occurrence. Additional cutscenes are also featured, and although not affecting the game in any way, they give a sense of achievement when you complete each level. In fact there's very little to criticise about *Descent*. The controls are a bit tricky at first, but ultimately *Descent* is immensely playable and above all, great fun. A thoroughly enjoyable blast.

RATING

GRAPHICS	85
ANIMATION	82
SOUND FX	78
MUSIC	79
LASTABILITY	89
PLAYABILITY	90

OVERALL



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY
CONTINUOUS: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 3

RELEASE TBA

PRICE TBA

BY IMAGINEER

PLAYERS 1-2



I am sure that a quick glance at the screen shots around on the

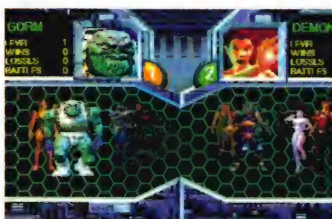
page will tell you all you need to know about *Criticom* without me even mouthing the phrase "beat 'em up". And before you ask, yes, there is a plot, along with a story for each of the competitors. And, no, I won't be padding out this introduction by telling you all about it (er... that comes later!)

A rather unique detail worth concentrating on with *Criticom* is that although there are eight characters to choose from, as is fairly normal, it's not quite that cut and dried. In a rather clever twist, each combatant has three grades of skill. Now this isn't your normal 'Easy, Medium, Hard' skill option, but rather a chance to develop your character in the same way that a real Karateka might grade through progressive belts; learning new moves and becoming more effective as time goes by. Depending on your choice of character, you could start with the standard two punches, two kicks, and nine special moves (generally accessed by use of R1 and R2 as 'shift' keys followed by button combinations), but should you beat all the other opponents, you'll go on to fight the next grade-up version of yourself. Beat this opponent and you'll qualify for the next grade yourself, earning extra moves. Go round the lot again, and you'll collect the final, devastating moves on offer. You also take on a slightly different graphical appearance with each progression, as do the higher version of each character you fight against. Clever stuff, non?



GORM

Join me, as I spend the day with an ordinary competitor on an extraordinary mission...



Gorm comes from a dying race called the Dorlons. Though a peaceful race, they have been honing their martial fighting skills in readiness to challenge for the ancient Relic (a powerful and highly magical crystal), as they believe it will help propagate their species throughout the universe.

Slightly reminiscent of Marvel's The Thing in appearance, Gorm is a slow-moving brick-like character that fights using a large staff (er... not at all like The Thing. D'oh!) Even at Grade One he's still a formidable fighter, mostly thanks to his ground projectile and damaging follow-up move after a knockdown (ie rolling up into a huge ball and bombing them!)

A DAY IN THE LIFE



Becoming a Grade Two fighter bestows Gorm with some bits of body armour, a better fighting staff, and four new moves; including a spinning blade projectile. Now I just have to beat all of the Grade Two versions of the other characters and I'll be upgraded again!

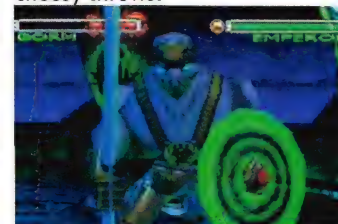


Of course, before that I've got to take on the higher level version of myself. This is Gorm at his best, with moves including the near-unbeatable 'earthquake, ground projectile' combo. Oddly, the Third Grade fights are the easiest, simply because you are so F-ing rock hard by now!

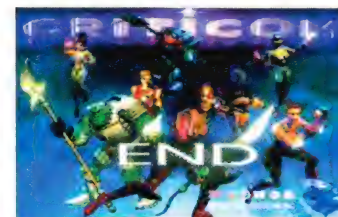


BUT WAIT! What's this? Just when you thought you'd completed the game, up pops the big baddie — The Emperor. Oo-er!

And here's the emperor, in all his gorgeous purple and green...erness. He's pretty nifty, and thanks to his shield, can generally avoid being caught with cheesy throws.



Rather sadly, The Emperor's actually fairly crap and a bit of a disappointment — but there you go. By the way, I haven't spoilt all your fun by showing you this. I finished the game after four hours, so it's not as though you're going to be battling it out for months anyway!



Sound the fanfares, bring in the girlies — I am triumphant! Each character has a different end sequence — so it's well worth progressing through the ranks using each character if only to see these. There's also some absolutely blinding animation shown in the end game sequence, so get to it!

DELARA ZERAL

Delara is the strongest warrior in her clan, out for revenge after having had her mate-to-be killed defending the Relic. She shies away from advanced weaponry, preferring a sword, shield, and simple armour. Along with some extremely wicked combos, Delara has a number of wave projectiles, and a very nasty 'sword-through-your-guts' overhead throw.

AND HERE'S THAT GUT-SPlicing THROW IN ALL ITS GLORY.



SLIDING IN IS A CHEAP TRICK, BUT IT WORKS!



SONORK NEZAM

The brother of Delara's dead intended, Sonork is a nasty piece of work who'll do anything to take his brother's place as leader. He starts off a fast and tricky fighter, but as he progresses through the grades, he takes on more and more cybernetic enhancements, ending up as more machine than humanoid. A right bugger, and no mistakin'.

IT MAY LOOK LIKE A FRIENDLY GESTURE, BUT THE 'HAND ON THE SHOULDER' IS THE BUILD UP TO A NASTY THROW



A BEAUTIFUL FINISHING MOVE. JUMP ON HIS HEAD!



YENJI

Yenji's a bit of a babe, clad in black metallic attire, and armed with a pair of Wolverine-like razor claws. Having witnessed the murder of her family as a child, she is driven by revenge, and uses her physical and mental skills to their full extent in attempting to destroy the Relic. Yenji is a swift and skilled ninja-like fighter, making use of psionic power at higher grades.

YENJI MAY LOOK A BIT FRAGILE, BUT HER AGILITY AND SPEED MAKE UP FOR ANY SHORTCOMINGS IN THE STRENGTH DEPARTMENT. SHE ALSO HAS SOME DEVASTATING COMBINATIONS INVOLVING THOSE NASTY SHARP CLAWS.



DOUBLE-BLADES TO THE BACK OF THE NECK. OW!



S.I.D.

After the War Era, a plague-ravaged race of being known as the Estarians had only one hope of survival: to transfer their minds into huge machines. However, many didn't survive the transfer, and those who did became psychotic. The remaining S.I.D. (Sentient Integrated Droid) now wander the wilderness causing havoc with their many missiles, projectiles, and their extremely large arms!

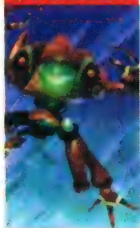
THOUGH BULKY, S.I.D. HAS AN EXCELLENT REACH AND GOOD DEFENCE.



GRADE 1



GRADE 2



GRADE 3



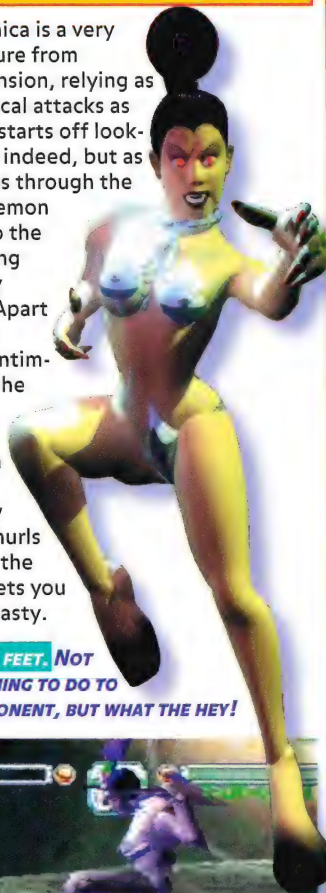
S.I.D. AND GORM GET IT ON. NICE AND COLD TOO.



DEMONICA

Woof! Demonica is a very strange creature from another dimension, relying as much on magical attacks as physical. She starts off looking very tasty indeed, but as she progresses through the grades, the demon within rises to the surface, making things all jolly unfanciable. Apart from floating around in an intimidating way, she has a number of fireball attacks, and a devastating psychic throw that literally hurls you high into the air and then lets you drop again. Nasty.

IN WITH BOTH FEET. NOT THE NICEST THING TO DO TO A FALLEN OPPONENT, BUT WHAT THE HEY!



GRADE 1



GRADE 2



GRADE 3



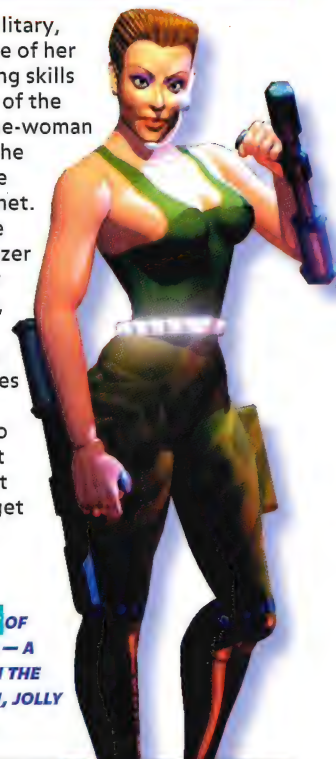
FIREBALLS AHoy, AS DEMONICA SUMMONS MAGIC.



SGT. EXENE DULALT

Raised in the military, Exene makes use of her excellent fighting skills and knowledge of the baton, in her one-woman mission to use the Relic to stop the wars on her planet. She also has the ability to fire tazer projectiles over short distances, although this range increases as she progresses through the grades. She also has an excellent throw and a fast handspring to get out of trouble.

THE FIRST STAGE OF EXENE'S THROW — A BATON THROUGH THE STOMACH. HMM, JOLLY NICE, I'M SURE.



GRADE 1



GRADE 2



GRADE 3



FATBOY'S DOWN, AND IT'S TIME TO DIE.

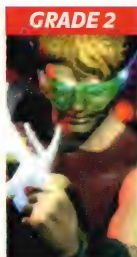


DAYTON TRENT

A soldier of fortune, Dayton wants to find the Relic simply because he is being paid to. He's your average Han Solo-type; unshaven, messy, and ready to use any method to get what he wants. His main weapons are a laser knife and a gun, and as far as complex throws go... well, you can expect a good honest knee in the cobbles.

GUNS GUNS GUNS!

IT MIGHT NOT BE FAIR, BUT, BY JIGGERY, IT IS JOLLY GOOD FUN! SHAME GORM IS BUILT LIKE A BRICK-PRIVY.



SOME OF THE INTRO SHOTS. VERY SEXY INDEED.



COMMENT

STEVE

The overall look of *Criticom* is one of a very polished game. Each character has a fully rendered intro with sampled speech outlining their reason for fighting, so initial thoughts are very favourable. The actual fighting is fine, too, with plenty of (often rather obscure) moves, and nice twists on the bout system with the players given two health bars as opposed to the customary one. My criticisms, however, lie with the control system. To me, *Tekken* is a superb beat 'em up because it is fluid and logical to control. *Criticom* runs along the same lines as *Toshinden*, and as in the Takara game I found myself constantly struggling with the controls – and it occasionally seemed as if things were out of my hands. That said, perseverance brings more than a fair share of rewards, and while *Criticom* is an impressive beat 'em up, my heart still belongs to *Tekken*.

HOUSTON. WE HAVE A PROBLEM.

Oh dear... 1) Stand with your back to the edge of the arena, get an opponent to start a combo while facing you and then jump out of the way while they helplessly continue on to their doom. 2) Stand side-on to the edge so that, when they move to stand in front of you, the same thing happens. 3) Knock someone to the ground and then keep sending ground projectiles after them. As soon as they get up they get knocked down again, and you can very quickly shuffle them right across the arena and off the edge. Silly, silly problems and a real shame.



COMMENT

MATT

Criticom is a very, very interesting game. The graphics are excellent, the animation gorgeous, and the presentation throughout quite breathtaking. It's a splendid combination of *Tekken*, *Toshinden*, and *FX Fighter* (a PC title) and though it presents no real competition against *Tekken*, it easily bests the other two. If only there weren't so many silly little problems and glitches I'd be going bonkers about this game, but it's just too easy to win using foul means when you get into trouble – some of the moves are a bit too effective. Another problem I had was when using the R1 button as a 'shift' key. The moves didn't seem to come as easily as normal moves, and even a fraction of a second's delay is too much in a game like this. The development team behind this have obviously got their act together, and I for one am very much looking forward to the possibility of a *Criticom 2*, where (I hope) we'll see those problems tidied up. Not exactly a classic, but certainly well worth a look. Just don't expect it to take too long to play through to the end.

RATING

GRAPHICS	90
ANIMATION	91
SOUND FX	89
MUSIC	89
LASTABILITY	82
PLAYABILITY	83
OVERALL	82



GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
CONTINUES: MEMORY CARD
SKILL LEVELS: 4

RELEASE FEBRUARY

PRICE £44.99

BY BULLFROG

PLAYERS 1-2



he PlayStation grand prix is well under way as a handful of the finest racers viciously struggle to gain pole-position. As we near the end of the first lap *WipeOut* narrowly holds the lead, swerving wildly to stay ahead of *Ridge Racer* and *Destruction Derby*. But the race has only just begun and more contenders are joining the fight for first place every week. Namco's *Ridge Racer Revolution* is tipped to grab the championship in 1996, but for the time being it's Bullfrog's *Hi-Octane* which is weaving its way through the pack, valiantly fighting for a place on the winner's podium. The odds are stacked against it, though. It doesn't have the pace or the super-slick presentation of *WipeOut*, and lacks the arcade parentage that makes *Ridge Racer* so popular. It does, however, have one thing all these other contenders lack: it is the creation of Bullfrog. As the developers responsible for groundbreaking products like *Magic Carpet* and *Syndicate*, they're widely regarded as one of the UK's premier developers, but as yet their PlayStation track record has yet to be proven.

Hi-Octane debuted on the PC approximately six months ago amidst a shower of critical acclaim. Bullfrog has taken into account the negative criticisms aimed at it's new-born baby and as result the PlayStation version is here, boasting more tracks, enhanced graphics and the all-important multi-player mode. But is that enough? Has it got the power to last the distance against the heavyweights already cruising the circuit, or will it end up skidding off at the first corner and left to burn in the gravel traps?

Hi-Octane



THE NASTY NINE

The *Hi-Octane* championship is stretched over nine races, kicking off on the oval Amazon Delta Turnpike. The Trans-Asia Interstate is plagued by a tight hair-pin bend but is otherwise a pretty easy ride. The Shanghai Dragon circuit, on the other hand, is dogged by snow and ice patches on the track and hides a stretch of dangerously tight corners. The long straight that starts the New Cher-

nobyl Central track allows you to race out in front using the turbos, but again an otherwise simple race is made considerably more difficult by the inclusion of some vicious bends. Both Slam Canyon and Thrak City are devilishly difficult courses, but thankfully the going gets slightly easier for the three new tracks; Ancient Mine Town, Arctic Land, and the DeathMatch arena.



IN THE HOTSEAT

The bog-standard championship race is joined by a selection of other game modes. Select single race to practice any of the tracks against computer drone cars or alternative compete against your best lap time in the clone time trials. The multi-player 'hotseat' game wins the award for most useless option though. Up to eight drivers can compete, the first player controlling the action for thirty seconds, when control switches over to Player Two in the second craft. Meanwhile Player One's ship is computer-controlled until their turn comes around again, so for during an eight lap race you'll spend less than a minute at the wheel. Hotseat? Hmm, it's not even lukewarm.



SPLITTING HAIRS

Hi-Octane boasts a split-screen two-player game rather than the now familiar link-up option. A good idea admittedly, but one that falls short simply because the PlayStation can't handle it. In the one-player game *Hi-Octane* is slick. It's fast, smooth and exciting — everything a racing game should be. The split-screen game is a different story altogether. Minuscule screen size makes driving extremely difficult but that's only part of the problem. Imagine driving a Metro up a step hill in fourth gear. Through three feet of snow. It's painfully slow, jerky as hell and totally unplayable. A link-up option would have been a better alternative, and while it's not as convenient as a split-screen two-player mode, at least it's functional.

COMMENT

STEVE

The PC version of *Hi-Octane*

seemed to go down very well, but on the PlayStation, the Bullfrog game finds itself against SIE's superb *WipeOut*. For newcomers to the racing genre who are perhaps overwhelmed by *WipeOut*'s complex controls, *Hi-Octane* is a viable alternative. But sadly its simplicity is also its downfall. While racing and blasting the opposing vehicles starts off as great fun, the lack of substance means it soon gets tedious. Another wasted opportunity is the split-screen two-player. In theory this is a brilliant idea, but the game slows down so badly the control of your racer suffers immensely and frustration reigns supreme. That said, to pick up and play, *Hi-Octane* is a playable game in the short term, but I have the feeling most people will be sticking to their tried'n'tested copies of *WipeOut*. I know I am.



WIPE OUT

Eliminating your opponents is an integral part of *Hi-Octane*, as all too often the only way to scramble to the front of the pack is by taking out a couple of the drone cars along the way. Thank the Lord, then, that they are loads of bonuses to help you on your way.

MINIGUN POWER-UP

Fed up with the puny pea-shooter strapped to the front of your ship? Grab this baby for instant relief.



MISSILE POWER-UP

Beef up the power of your homing missiles by driving over this useful icon.



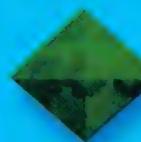
BOOSTER UPGRADE

Without turbo boosts, the chances of winning are minimal so collect this bonus to ensure victory.



SHIELD TOP-UP

Slap a Band-Aid over the smoking blast holes and repair any damage with the ever-useful shield upgrade.



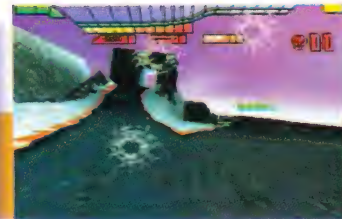
AMMUNITION CLIP

What good are weapons without ammunition? Pick up this bonus and cause havoc on the track.



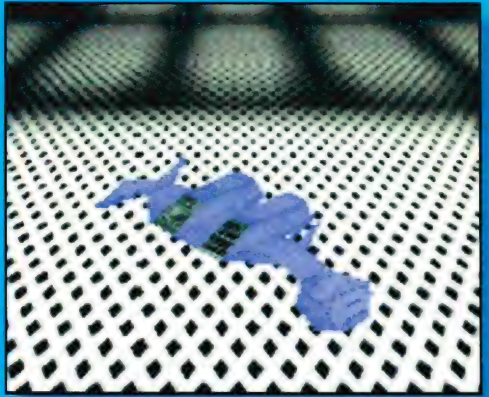
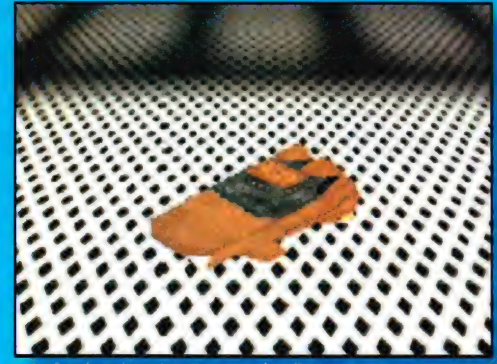
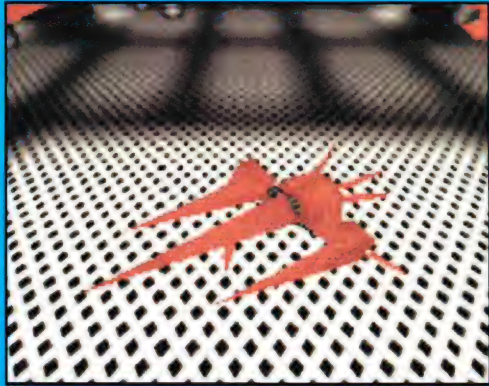
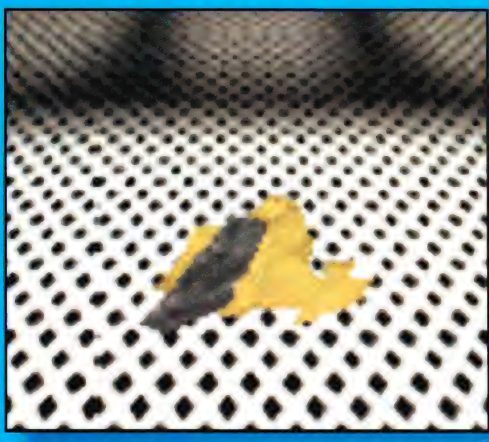
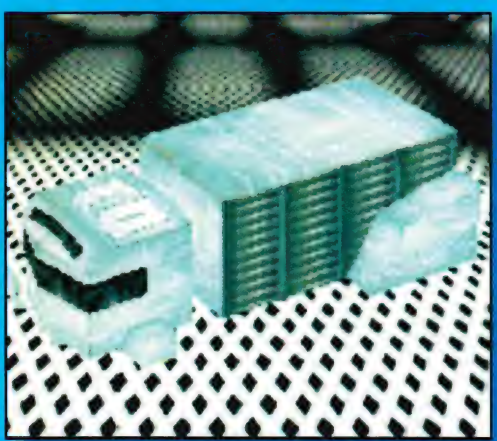
FUEL SUPPLIES

Stay out of the refuelling pit for as long as possible by driving over as many purple fuel pods as possible.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS...

The six cars available vary both in appearance and performance. The best all-rounder is the KD-1 Speeder, a DeLorean-style racer that is the perfect beginner's choice. The two heavyweight vehicles, the Berserker and the Jugga, are huge and are therefore slow, but more than make up for their lack of speed with excellent armour and firepower. The Outrider is fast but its wafer-thin armour is prone to missile attack, while the missile-like Vampyr is quick but difficult to control. Of them all, the Flexiwing is the obvious choice for seasoned racers, it's unmatched top speed and acceleration proving invaluable. As an added bonus it resembles a Cylon Raider – cool.



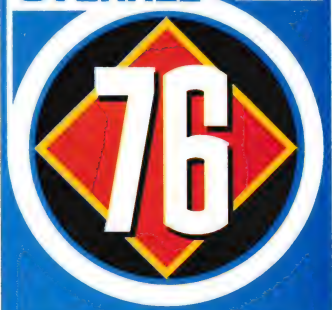
COMMENT

ALEX

Although *Hi-Octane* debuted on the PC a mere six months ago, it's looking awfully dated already. *WipeOut* is the obvious game to draw comparisons against, and to be honest *Hi-Octane* doesn't fare too well. It's not as fast or as smooth, and lacks the graphical elegance of Sony's futuristic racer although it is more accessible than *WipeOut*. This works both for and against *Hi-Octane* because while it's very simple to pick up and play, it's leans towards being a little too easy and is therefore short of lasting appeal. The varied selection of tracks and cars does add to the game's longevity, as do the various game modes, but it lacks the gradual learning curve that makes *WipeOut* so gripping. So, while *WipeOut* becomes more absorbing the longer you play it, *Hi-Octane* is great for a few hours of frantic blasting but ultimately it's repetitive and unrewarding. Sadly it is the quite atrocious split-screen game which underlines the fact that *Hi-Octane* really is outclassed by the more impressive releases that push the PlayStation to its limits..

RATING

GRAPHICS	84
ANIMATION	78
SOUND FX	73
MUSIC	70
LASTABILITY	72
PLAYABILITY	83
OVERALL	76



FILL 'ER UP

Unfortunately the hoverships don't run on thin air (well, technically they do, but...) so you'll need to refuel every so often. Your power cells are charged on the fly, by skimming through the pit lanes scattered throughout each course. Energy top-ups are

time dependent so the longer you spend in the pits, the more fuel you'll take on board. Ammunition and shield power is restored in much the same way, although there's a separate refuelling station for each.





the birth of a star...

the ultimate 21st century boy, graces the world stage..

JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE



The Objects of Desire



Quiffs, Riffs & Rock 'n' Roll



Featuring The Henchmen of Hades



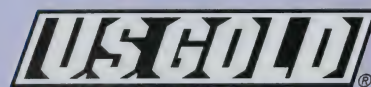
& Introducing your Devilish host, El Diablo Esq.



PC CD-ROM



it's only rock & roll
..but somethings are worth playing for.



Off-World Interceptor Extreme

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
CONTINUES: PASSWORD
SKILL LEVELS: 1

RELEASE JANUARY
PRICE £39.99
BY BMG
PLAYERS 1-2



I don't own a car for many reasons. I don't like giving lifts to mates, London traffic sucks big-time and, basically, I'm liable to suffer from the most incredible bouts of road rage. Instead I unleash the full force of my automotive aggression in driving games, where I'll go to any lengths to cut-up, ram, barge and tail-gate other motorists. The more violent the game, the more fun it is. At least that's what I thought. *Off-World Interceptor* is based on violence. You've volunteered to track down vicious criminals in a galaxy-wide purge against crime. Only, just like in the best stories, you've got a small amount of very crap equipment while the perps you're up against have wisely bought in armies, huge defence networks and drive themselves around in big tanks. The gameplay is very straightforward. Battle your way across a planet's surface, zap everything you find and keep your fingers crossed. Like the M25, there's heavy traffic, cars that have the build quality of a company rep's motor and are easy to destroy and no services in sight. One point of note for the Department of Transport: road cones have been replaced by landmines. Will the DoT please do this in real life as driving will be a far more interesting experience and traffic volume should drop to acceptable levels within the first six months.



KNOCKING AN ENEMY INTO AN ONCOMING OBSTACLE HALTS THEM.

THE LARGER VEHICLES AND INSTALLATIONS ARE BEST AVOIDED, AS VERY LITTLE TIME IS AVAILABLE TO DESTROY THEM.

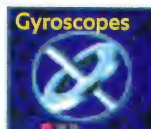


BUGGY BOYS

Like all the best shooty driving games, your puny buggy can be upgraded with better equipment or traded in for a newer model. Providing you're a bit of a tight-wad and don't throw your money around early on the game, it's actually not too hard to upgrade your motor to a much better model after only completing a few levels.



Tyres
Give you more grip on slopes.



Gyroscopes
Keeps your buggy stable.



Shields
Deflects laser bolts.



Engine
Extra speed.



Nitros
Turbo boost.



Missiles
Total carnage.

COMMENT

MATT

It's reviewing games like this that puts me off my job. 1) it's a shoddy 3DO conversion. 2) It's not even a particularly deserving game. 3) There's tons of quite nice FMV stuff that sets you up for what is ultimately a big disappointment. So what are you left with? An average-looking, extremely unoriginal product that's hardly likely to drag anyone away from their *WipeOut* and *Ridge Racer* games. The graphics are very average, the gameplay is as shallow as a frozen puddle, and the fact that you can just pelt through the levels without taking much interest in the world around you hardly says much for the basic design of the game. No, I'm sorry, this won't do. Unless developers start dropping dung like this and start delivering some real quality, the PlayStation will quickly lose its 'wonder machine' label and become known as a conversion dumping ground for old 3DO products. Please don't do this to us again. If I was marking this game, I'd have killed it.

RACING THROUGH AN EXPLOSION TOWARDS THE END OF THE STAGE.

DESPITE THE HUGE WHEELS WHICH THE PLAYER'S VEHICLE HAS, A SIDE-ON EXPLOSION IS OFTEN ENOUGH TO SEND THE HUGE TRUCK ROLLING — INFLECTING LOTS OF DAMAGE IN THE PROCESS.

A MISSILE TEARS PAST THE PLAYER'S VEHICLE.

COMMENT

STEVE

It really gets my goat up that a cluster of the games we've had this month are nothing more than tattered up 3DO conversions. What's the point? These games weren't that good when they were first released, and with all the excellent games the PlayStation already has, these games are all the worse in comparison. *Off World Interceptor Extreme* does nothing to change this. While it's not a wholly bad game, a few small flaws render it less than playable. During the action sequences the frame rate just isn't fast enough. Consequently it's nearly impossible to tell exactly what's going on, and I found myself missing the power-ups and holding down every fire button and hoping to God I made it through in one piece — hardly the stuff of a playable and engrossing game! The only reason you could possibly end up sticking with it is because, surprisingly, the FMV sequences are actually funny. But that's no reason to blow money on what is nothing more than an average conversion from a machine the PlayStation already leaves in the shade.

RATING

GRAPHICS
ANIMATION
SOUND FX
MUSIC
LASTABILITY
PLAYABILITY

74

69

70

73

70

67

OVERALL

68

HEY, BEAVIS, THIS SUCKS

Whether it was intended all along, or simply a way of disguising bad acting, lousy *Blake's 7*-style costumes and a script that sounds like it's been translated from Japanese to English by a semi-literate Croatian, something unique has occurred in O-WI's FMV sequences — they're actually funny. Yes, the production is truly terrible, but the programmers have salvaged the show by shoving two Beavis and Butthead-type characters in the frame who comment on the action. Believe it or not, these are rather amusing. However once you've watched these and then started playing the game, you don't feel like laughing any more.

GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: AVE
CONTINUES: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 3

RELEASE FEBRUARY

PRICE £39.99

BY EA

PLAYERS 1



BOOM! ANOTHER, DISTANT ALIEN BITS THE DUST IN EA'S TEDIOUS 3DO CONVERSION.



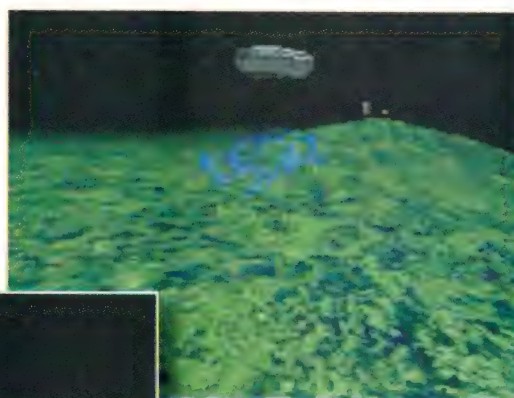
ShockWave



he computer games business is packed with more inexplicable mysteries than *The X Files*. From pointless hardware to even more pointless software we're constantly plagued by them. Add to that a bundle of software conversions from old 3DO games, and you can't help but slap yourself on the forehead and shout "why?" The latest of these is EA's *ShockWave*. A year ago it was a passable little 3D shooter which sparked a glimmer of interest simply for being one of the first 3DO games. But take away the enthusiasm generated by a new format, and what you're left with is, fundamentally, crap.

It's another us vs them blast. The world's armies are getting mauled by gigantic alien stalking things while cities across the globe are having their populace nerve gassed, hoovered up and turned into unnaturally big people-kebabs - complete with chilli sauce. But that's not your problem. What is your problem is that, for whatever reason, you're the only bloke qualified to pilot Earth's latest piece of alien-busting military hardware. This lump of kill-bastard death-deal-o-rama comes complete with lasers and missiles (that's right, two whole weapons) and a telly where annoying actors appear in FMV and shout at you - no matter how well you've done.

So the scene is set. All that stands between mankind and junk food doom for Earth is you. And boy, doesn't it sound exciting?



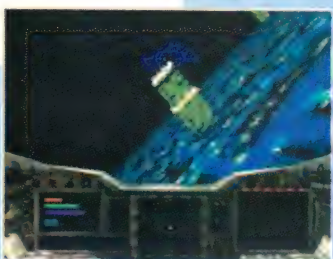
HEAD FOR THE [HOLLYWOOD] HILLS

Survive long enough and you'll end up in Los Angeles trying to save movie stars and tramps alike. You start by blowing away the force-field that leads to Burbank, zooming over the Hollywood logo then confronting the alien armada. The air targets have to be your priority, because they're the best shots. Next come the stalkers, tanks and hoovers. Eliminate those and it's the pod creatures who have to buy the farm. That leaves you with the pyramid, where all the little humans are stored, and the aliens' communication base. Unfortunately, our heroic pilot went belly-up during the first LA assault, and felt very little compunction to continue.

COMMENT

ROB

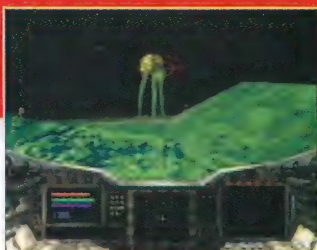
This was one of the first 3DO titles I saw, and even then I thought it was utter shite. It thus comes as a bit of a surprise that, some 18 months later, EA see fit to unleash this pile of pap on the PlayStation. With the likes of *Thunderhawk 2* and *Agile Warrior* bursting on the scene with large sprites, detailed backdrops and engrossing gameplay, *ShockWave* fails to match them in any department. The tedious gameplay consists of picking off distant targets, while listening out for hilarious messages from the small FMV character who appears now and then. Similarly, it fails to impress on the graphical front, too. The backdrops are like huge patchwork rugs, brightened up with the odd hill or building, and the aliens you've been sent to kill are poxy little sprites with bugged all in the way of animation or scaling. After the likes of *FIFA* and *Viewpoint*, it comes as a real shock to see EA releasing *ShockWave*. It's a game with no redeeming factors, and there is no way on Earth it could ever warrant a forty quid price tag.





STALK OF THE TOWN

The alien invasion fleet comes in two basic flavours – stalking things and flying jobbies. Although there are various permutations, such as ships that take a few more hits to kill, or ones that fire more quickly, they're all pretty similar. Their basic tactic seems to be unleash a couple of shots before being sent to burning hell by your laser cannons.



Stalkers: These, well, stalk. Occasionally they'll shoot a bit, but most of the time they just keel over and die.



Pod Creatures: They've got no brains and breed like anything. Are these aliens from Essex?



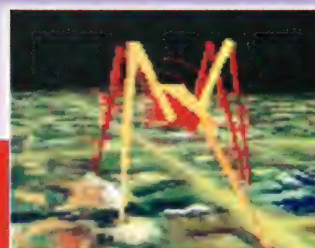
Interceptor: Faster and more agile than the usual flyers. These can actually dole out a few hits before taking a missile up the jacksy.



Heatseekers: Probably the most dangerous alien. They're easy to kill, but get a load of shots off first.



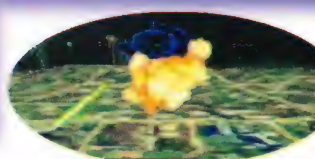
Tanks: Honestly, don't these aliens watch films? They didn't need these in *War of the Worlds*, you know.



Suckers: These giant, unarmed hoovers land on cities sucking up the population.

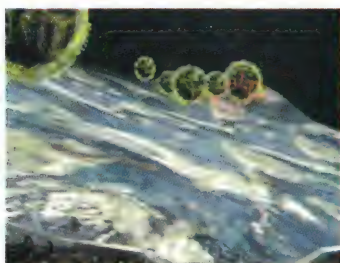


TIE Fighters: They look like TIE Fighters, only these johnnies fly around in circles trying to make you feel dizzy.

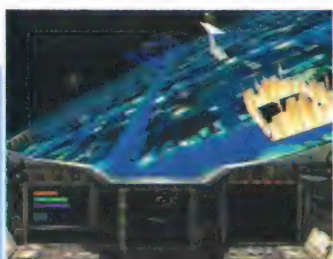


HUGE METEORS FLOAT AIMLESSLY ABOVE SUBURBIA, READY TO CRASH INTO AN UNSUSPECTING PILOT.

ROAD TO HELL



Although it seems like you've got complete freedom to fly pretty much where you want in the game, in practice you can't. That's because your so-called chums who are tucked safely away in their orbiting space station makes sure that if you deviate from your route, even accidentally, your shields start draining. It's bloody unfair to say the least, especially as some paths are so thin you hardly have room to manoeuvre.



COMMENT

STEVE

Just what is the point of converting

tripe like this to the PlayStation. In its original 3DO format, *ShockWave* was dismissed as untaxing drivel, so why bother repeating a failed formula? This is quite simply an empty shoot 'em up which features tiny sprites against bland, unchanging backdrops. Utterly pointless. The action, for want of a better word, is tedious. Although the missions have slightly varied objectives, it still comes down to you shooting the same half-dozen types of aliens over and over again. What's more, they're stupid. They'll ram your craft if you're heading towards them because they're simply too dumb to get out of the way. That's compounded by the stupid set path you have to follow, where the aliens can go outside, but you can't. The addition of fancy FMV scenes try to paint this as something far deeper than it really is, but there's very little meat on this pathetic carcass. Even a occasional neat visual trick doesn't salvage this very sub-standard shooter. A terrible, unnecessary release.

RATING

GRAPHICS	62
ANIMATION	60
SOUND FX	67
MUSIC	60
LASTABILITY	55
PLAYABILITY	62
OVERALL	56



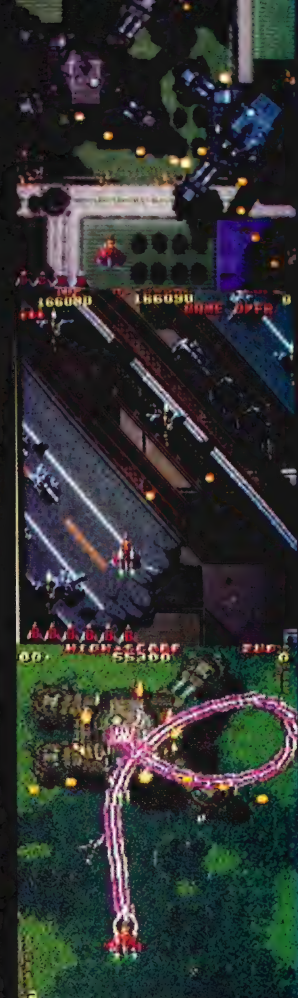
CONTENTS

100% pure, undiluted,
classic gameplay.

THE RAIDEN PROJECT ISN'T NEW. THE FIRST PART WAS RELEASED IN THE ARCADES IN 1990, THE SECOND IN 1993. BOTH CAN STILL BE FOUND THERE TODAY, HOLDING THEIR OWN ALONGSIDE THE CURRENT HIGH PROFILE ARCADE MACHINES.

THE RAIDEN PROJECT STANDS APART FROM THE CURRENT CROP OF PLAYSTATION GAMES. IT CAN AFFORD TO. RAIDEN SETS ITS OWN LIMITS, DRAWS UP ITS OWN RULES IN THIS BETTER-THAN-THOU INDUSTRY. THE ONLY CUTTING EDGE ELEMENT IN THE RAIDEN PROJECT IS ITS DEDICATED CONVERSION PHILOSOPHY. SO, IF YOU THINK A GOOD GAME RELIES ON CURRENT TRENDS RATHER THAN SOLID GAMEPLAY THEN PREPARE FOR DISAPPOINTMENT.

Pure...Und



"ONE OF, IF NOT THE CLASSIC ARCADE SHOOT'EM-UP OF ALL TIME. THE RAIDEN PROJECT IS
QUITE SIMPLY ONE OF THE BEST ARCADE SHOOT'EM-UPS EVER CREATED." 90% GAMEPRO

iluted...Gameplay

THERE MAY BE NO WAY OF TELLING WHICH GAMES WILL BE CLASSICS BUT RAIDEN DOESN'T CARE...

R A I D E N R E M A I N S

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ocean

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GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: VARIABLE
CONTINUES: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 3

RELEASE OUT NOW

PRICE £39.99

BY SCE

PLAYERS 1-2

Air Combat



ir Combat was one of the first few Play-Station games I ever saw. Though it was called *Ace Combat* at the time

(being the first Japanese version) it caught my eye if only because it was the first flight-sim I'd seen running on the machine. Seventeen missions of simple-but-fun bombing, fighting, and general combat shenanigans, ranging over a number of different locations and scenarios. Sounds all right doesn't it.

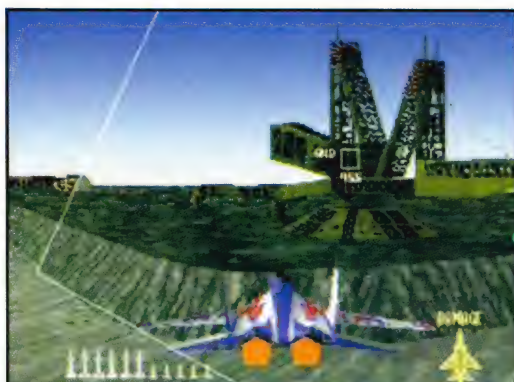
Things start off nice and easy with simple seek-and-destroy missions involving a number of enemy craft and specific ground targets. As you progress, however, you'll be called upon to attack enemy headquarters, disable enemy fuel supply facilities, destroy enemy navy installations, and even embark upon rescue missions.

You're not alone though, as a wingman of your choice will accompany you on each mission, with your selection of craft and weaponry also influencing the outcome considerably. On this matter, each completed mission rewards a set amount of cash to play with, so it's up to you to decide whether you'd prefer a better craft or

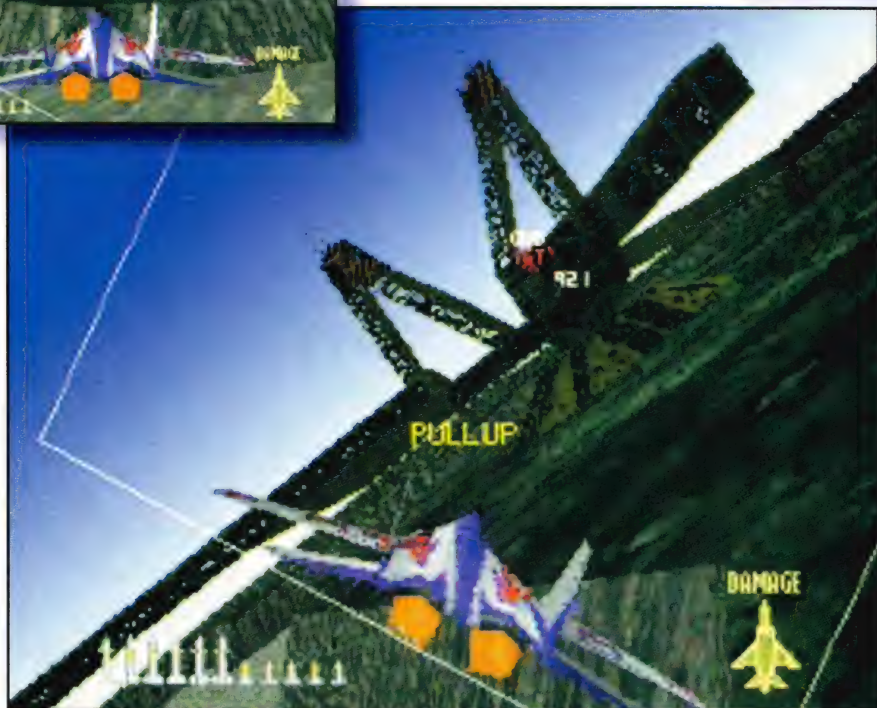
better on-board company. You might have the mightiest aircraft in the fleet, but if you've got Goofy spinning round on his chair behind you, there's a good chance you'll be testing out the ejector seats before tea time.

BUFFALO WINGS

First things first – select a mission. Once you've done that, you receive a mission briefing detailing where the primary targets are positioned, along with where the main forces of resistance will be encountered.



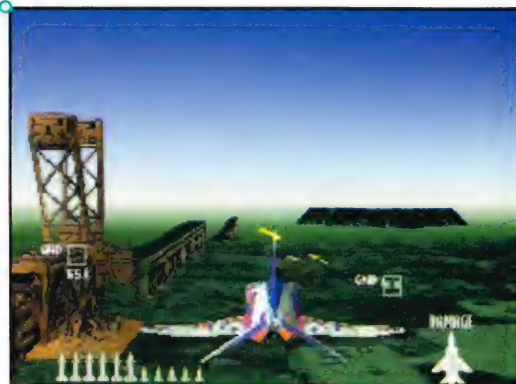
TO ATTACK MANY OF THE PRIMARY TARGETS YOU NEED TO FLY CLOSE TO THE GROUND. THIS CAN BE A DANGEROUS PASTIME IF YOU'RE NOT AWARE OF YOUR ALTITUDE, BUT THANKFULLY A VISUAL WARNING AND A VOCAL ANNOUNCEMENT LET YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO "PULL UP!" DICKHEAD.



THINGS ARE CLEARER USING THE OUTSIDE VIEW, BUT YOU DO LOSE LOTS OF THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE HUD.



All this done, you can then select a wingman for the mission. They start off pretty crap, but as your money increases, so do your choices. You can also set them specific tasks at this point. For instance, should they watch your ass or soften up target forces? Hmmm.



ANYONE FOR TWO-PLAYER JAPES? EAT MY SPLIT-SCREEN ANTICS.





THINGS ARE GETTING DAMN BUSY HERE, BUT A QUICK GLANCE AT THE MINI-MAP HELPS KEEP THINGS POINTED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



MOST OF THE AIRCRAFT ARE BEAUTIFULLY DETAILED, SO TRY AND HAVE A CLOSE LOOK BEFORE YOU DEAL OUT THE DEATH.

COMMENT

STEVE

It's a funny old world. I first saw *Air Combat* in its Japanese incarnation and thought it was more than adequate fare. In the last month or so, however, we've been spoilt with the likes of Virgin's *Agile Warrior* and Core's *Thunderhawk 2*. Now, quite frankly — and surprising for a game barely three months old in its import form — Namco's game looks positively dated. The action is rather too simplistic when compared to the aforementioned Core and Virgin titles, and it falls between too many stools, as well. For example, if you want hot arcade firepower, *Agile's* the one for you, while sim fans will be more comfortable with *Thunderhawk*. The addition of extra plans is a major card up *Air Combat's* sleeve, but the repetitive nature of the dog-fighting is hardly going to inspire long-term lasting appeal.

F-117

Though the original stealth fighter gets good press, it is actually fairly arse. Yes, it can dodge radar with its non-stick crispy-crunchy Teflon coating, but it's sadly under-powered, under-armoured, and under-armed. Fortunately, it looks damn sexy.



F-14

One of the earliest planes available and one of my personal favourites, the Tomcat is a powerful fighter with a good all-round set of statistics. Oh yes, and Tom Cruise flew it in *Top Gun*.



A-10

Though slightly lacking in the engine power department, this bomber has some of the most powerful weaponry money can buy. It's also highly manoeuvrable.



COMMENT

MATT

Air Combat is definitely the 'lighter' of the aerial combat games around. This doesn't mean that AC is inferior to the likes of Sony's *Warhawk* and Virgin's *Agile Warrior*, but it's nowhere near as involving. With *Air Combat*, it's much more of an 'arcade' game. By this I mean that while *Agile Warrior* had weapons to collect, various tactics involving the different weapons, fuel supplies to replenish, etc, *Air Combat* is much more of 'point in the right direction and shoot everything' affair. That's fair enough, but having also been presented *Firestorm* to review this month, returning to *Air Combat* leaves you feeling a bit unchallenged/uninvolved. The graphics are jolly nice, the speech and sound FX work and, to be fair, things do get much better as the missions develop in complexity — with the wingmen adding to the proceedings. Ultimately, though, you are left feeling that *Air Combat* is really only 'average' and perhaps one for the shorter 'attention-spanned' player. Not at all bad, but I'd check out *Firestorm* and *Agile Warrior* first if I were you.

RATING

GRAPHICS	80
ANIMATION	80
SOUND FX	81
MUSIC	XX
LASTABILITY	79
PLAYABILITY	81

OVERALL





GAME SPEC

GAME DIFFICULTY: VARIOUS
CONTINUES: VARIOUS
SKILL LEVELS: VARIOUS

RELEASE SPRING

PRICE TBA

BY NAMCO

PLAYERS 1-2



When I was a kid I used to go along for my dad's company weekends. These would always take place in some plush hotel, with the highlight being the Saturday night dinner-do. On that night I'd get a two minute trolley dash through the mini-bar to keep me happy, and then be abandoned in favour of getting pissed at the company's expense. It's at this point that I'd take great delight in camping out in the hotel games room (and no, I don't mean walking up and down in an effeminate way saying "ooh, ducky").

The best thing about this was that although there only ever seemed to be six arcade machines (not including the "How sexy are you?" tester) they were classics of their day, and there was a steady stream of drunks in dinner jackets just itching to impress the receptionist they thought they'd pulled. In went the fifty pence, up came the GAME OVER sign, and off they went; slightly confused but chuckling in a self-congratulatory way. I'd then play their game for them.

Racing games with self-play demo modes were the best, and though many of the punters were certified drunk drivers themselves, it was surprising to see how many of them were unable to grasp the steering wheel let alone the concept. This is where I popped up, all cute and wide-eyed, offering to help by playing the game for them. Happy days indeed. And why the reminisce? Well Namco have released a compilation CD featuring a number of favourite, nay classic, games, many of which I'm sure, will send you off down Memory Lane. Bon Voyage.

NAMCO MUSEUM

VOLUME 1



GALAGA

You'd think that Namco had done it on purpose wouldn't you. By dropping a brief snippet of the classic *Galaga* at the front end of *Tekken* (a game that, if we're honest, is going to find it's way into the home of pretty much every PlayStation owner at some time or other) they effectively get everyone on a nostalgia trip; wishing that they could play more than just a few challenge stages. Give 'em a few months to stew, and then release a compilation featuring the aforementioned shoot-'em-up. Hey presto! Thousands of crusty old arcade freaks run screaming to their local games emporium, practically throwing their money at Namco.

For me, *Galaga* is one of the best shoot-'em-ups ever. It combines simplicity of play, with well thought out attack sequences and a nice progression through a wide variety of aliens. Whether you're playing to amass points or simply to see how far you can get, you really can't go wrong with *Galaga*.

5/5

ONE PARTICULAR TYPE OF ALIEN WILL OCCASIONALLY SWOOP DOWN AND ATTEMPT TO STEAL YOUR CRAFT WITH A TRACTOR BEAM. HOWEVER, IF YOU SHOOT THE OFFENDING ALIEN WITHOUT DAMAGING YOUR CRAFT YOU'LL NOT ONLY GET IT BACK, BUT IT'LL JOIN FORCES WITH YOUR SINGLE CRAFT FOR DOUBLE THE FUN!



A UNIQUE FEATURE OF GALAGA IS THE WAY THE ALIENS STREAM ONTO THE SCREEN AT THE START OF EACH LEVEL.



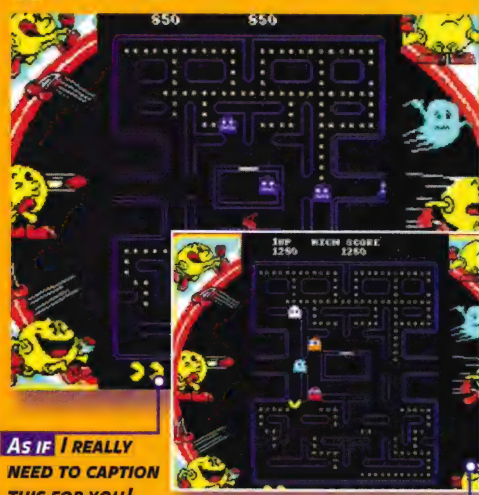
AFTER EVERY FEW LEVELS YOU ENTER A CHALLENGING STAGE. HERE A SET NUMBER OF ALIENS CONGA AROUND THE SCREEN IN A WEAVY-WINDY WAY, DOING THEIR BEST TO AVOID YOUR SHOTS. YOU ARE THEN AWARDED POINTS FOR YOUR ACCURACY AND OVERALL HIT RATE.

PAC-MAN

I'm sorry, but I refuse to believe that there's anyone left in the modern world that doesn't know who PAC-MAN is (and that includes mums and dads, aunts and uncles, doctors and nurses, etc) It's a large yellow circle that eats dots, doesn't like ghosts, and enjoys a variety of fruit products. And that's it.

Okay, serious head on — PAC-MAN is a classic. It's up there with *Space Invaders* as far as lasting legends go and has, without a doubt, emptied the pockets of millions of kiddies across the globe. Each level involves a maze containing one PAC-MAN, four ghosts, four power-pills, and a lot of tasty dots. Eat all the dots and you move on to the next level. Eat a power-pill and you get a few seconds to get your own back on the pursuing phantoms. Eat some fruit and you get some points. Yes its all nice and simple, but it's bloody addictive too.

4/5



AS IF I REALLY NEED TO CAPTION THIS FOR YOU!

CLOSE YOUR EYES, LISTEN TO THOSE FAMILIAR SOUNDS. YOU COULD ALMOST BE TWELVE AGAIN. IF ONLY!

BOSCONIAN

Bosconian is the only duffer on the CD as far as I'm concerned. It suffers from the fact that I don't remember the game myself (oh well, there goes that nostalgia trip), and it's also a bit dull. You fly in a nippy little craft, able to rotate 360° and shoot from the front and the back, sent out to destroy a set number of mother ships displayed on the radar. There are tons of enemy ships chasing you around, but it's pretty easy to just nip through all of them and hit the weak spot in the mother ship's centre. Probably one to ignore.

1/5



EXCITING STUFF, NON?

Yo MOTHER!

COMMENT

STEVE

Sadly, I'm old enough to remember

most of these from the first time round, and it wasn't long before playing *Pole Position* and *Rally X* took me back to the coin-ops in the leisure area at Chichester swimming pool. But things change. Chichester swimming pool is now a (crap) curry house, and the likes of *Bosconian*, *PAC-MAN* and *Toy Pop* are nothing but enjoyable diversions. Initially I loved the idea of bundling a load of 'classic' games on to one CD, but the games themselves all become a little repetitive after a few plays. *PAC-MAN* and *Rally X* are probably the most enjoyable, but overall I came away feeling a little cheated. The addition of the Namco museum bits is great, and wandering around rooms dedicated to *Galaga* and co is cool — but, again, only for a matter of minutes. If the taster of *Galaga* on *Tekken* (while loading) has whetted your appetite for these old games, this may hold some appeal. But I have a feeling that more than a few pairs of rose-tinted specs are about to break.

RALLY-X

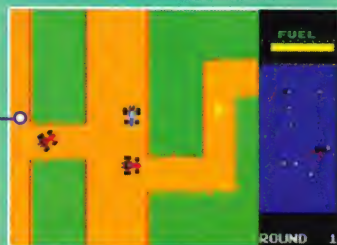
Rally-X always seemed to be the only game you could find when you were away on holiday. I remember it best from when I was a thirteen year-old lad away with my dad in Tenerife. The hotel only had one game to play, it was *Rally-X*, and it was one of those horrible table-top version where you had to wipe away peanuts, beer, and smears of sun tan lotion just to see the screen let alone play it.

Viewed from above, it's a pretty simple driving game where you have to negotiate a maze and collect a set number of flags positioned throughout the level. Similar to the ghosts in *PAC-MAN* (which *Rally-X* seems to be the driving equivalent of) there are a number of enemy cars after you which need to be avoided at all costs. Thanks to a handy radar, this isn't too hard, but as they increase in number and become more aggressive, things do get a bit hairy. You aren't exactly helpless though, and should an bad guy get too close, you can lose him using one of your limited smoke screens.

Simple stuff I know, but to a crusty like myself, a very welcome old friend.

4/5

OH DEAR. EVERYONE'S GANGING UP ON ME AND I WANT MY MUMMY!



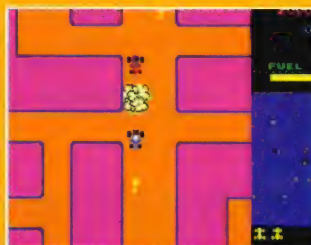
WHAT IS THERE TO SAY? ER... COLLECT THE FLAGS, MAN.

NEW RALLY-X

An updated version of *Rally-X*, featuring bonus flags (points and extra lives) and a more progressive structure — level one has one enemy, level two has two, etc.

There are also challenging rounds and a few cosmetic differences, but other than that it's all as before. Probably the better version on the CD.

4/5



EAT MY GUFF! GRR. IT'S GAME SUCH AS THIS THAT GIVE CLOUDS OF STRANGE GAS A BAD NAME.



POLE POSITION

This is the game that reminded me of the events as told in the main intro. There's something about racing games that make adults who'd ordinarily leave arcades well alone, suddenly get all cocky. I think it's because whereas most six year olds can put an adult to shame at PAC-MAN, adults can drive and children can't. Perhaps that's part of childrens' attraction to games of this type; not only is it fantasy and escapism, but it allows you to do something you're too young to do for real.

Er...anyway, enough psychology, on with the show. *Pole Position* was easily the best racing game of its time, and though it's since been put to shame by hundreds of similar releases, it will always have a place in my heart.

3/5

"PREPARE TO QUALIFY!" NOW THIS DOES RING A BELL!



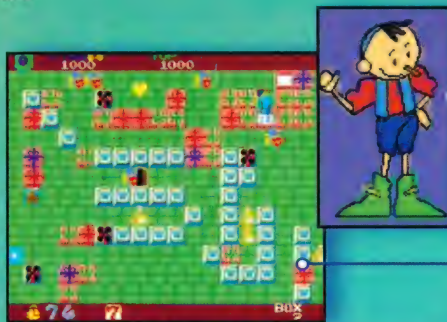
VROOM AND, MIGHT I VENTURE, VROOM!

TOYPOP

This is an interesting little game; although it's another one I don't actually remember. You're a little toy fella who has to progress through a number of toy boxes, opening presents and making use of the items found within. There are a number of nasty toys after you, and weapons can be found in the boxes to aid you — pins kill bad balloon, bombs will kill, etc.

Some boxes have booby prizes — boxing gloves on springs, explosives, etc — while others have sweets, speed-ups, and clothes (effectively you have three stages of health, shown by your state of undress). Even though this game doesn't have the advantage of making me go all glassy-eyed, it's actually damn good fun and a nice inclusion. Er, thanks Namco. Very kind.

4/5



I WANT SOMETHING EXCITING, AND A TOY, AND SOME CANDY!

EXHIBIT A

Apart from playing all these old games, you can also take a tour round Namco Museum. Here you'll find all manner of interesting facts, including Namco's history, and, er... stuff like that. You walk around in an impressive smooth 3D way, looking around and generally poking your nose into various corners. Little PAC-MAN is your guide, and will draw your attention to any particularly interesting features.



IMPORTANT NOTICE

In case you're wondering, the reason we've not awarded scores for all the individual elements is simply because of how much they vary throughout the various games on this CD. The overall score is the only relevant score given, and as such is how worthy we feel this disk is for release. (Of course, we're sad old crusties who cry at the mention of *Space Invaders*!

THANK YOU



ALL JOLLY CONFUSING IF YOU'RE NOT PLAYING

COMMENT

MATT

I could rant on about my happy memories of PAC-MAN until the cows come home, but at the end of the day, the value of this CD is very much down to whether you care about old games or not. I'd personally rather play *Galaga* than *Viewpoint*, but then again you might complain that the aged shoot 'em up doesn't exploit the PlayStation's "awesome graphical capabilities" (chortle chortle) but it is bloody good fun — and that's all that matters. It's also groovy that you can effectively sod about with the arcade machine's switches; altering levels, lives etc before getting into the games for real. Whether you remember the games or not is a big factor in the CD's value, but even if you've never played some of the games, many of them still show their classic colours — even against today's standards (let's face it, there's no competition between *Toy Pop* and *Rayman*!) If I owned this CD I'd probably only play *Galaga* and *Toy Pop* regularly, but I don't think I'd be exaggerating if I said there's a fair chance I'd play them to death.


RATING

GRAPHICS	NA
ANIMATION	NA
SOUND FX	NA
MUSIC	NA
LASTABILITY	NA
PLAYABILITY	NA
OVERALL	NA

84

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ISSUE 2 HAS ARRIVED

MAXIMUM



IMPORT ROUND-UP

THE AQUANAUT'S HOLIDAY

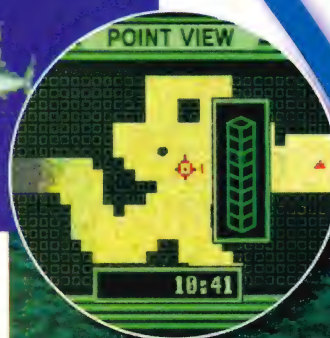
BY: Artoink

You can tell this is going to be a weird one just from the title. *The Aquanaut's Holiday*? Sounds like a dodgy quiz show from the Eighties. In fact it's an environmentally friendly "stroll in the ocean" that allows you to become at one with the fish. No, really, it is. By buckling up inside your tiny submarine you can bond with the creatures of the sea. Have a laugh with the dolphins, or maybe chat to the conger eels. You could even mingle with the sharks as even they don't sink their teeth in if you swim too close. You see, this game is just too damn nice. Any shooting? No. Explosions? None. Any excitement whatsoever? Zero. Zip. Bugger all. So what's the point? Well, there is very little point to this game. By communicating with the underwater wildlife using sonar you can use their 'energy' to build reefs – massive aquatic constructions that are used to attract other fishes. Obviously the more fish you befriend, the bigger the reef you can build until it eventually fills the sprawling sea-bed.

And that's about it. Admittedly talking to the fish isn't always that easy though, as the various sonar frequencies often trigger different responses. While one sound will transmit a friendly message, others will scare the fish away so fine-tuning your communication skills is one of the most time-consuming aspects of the game. Then again, so is exploring the underwater world which is both vast and very, um, blue. *The Aquanaut's Holiday* scores no bonus points for presentation which is, at best acceptable. While the landscapes are textured, detail is minimal and the clipping is atrocious, so rather than the horizon fading into view, unsightly rock formations pop up instantly. Ergh. The fish are nice though, gently swimming through the calm waters. The brightly-coloured shoals of aquatic wildlife are almost mesmerising as ambient music pours from the speakers, and it's all too easy to doze off to the subtle sound of waves lapping against the shore. Then again, it's probably because the game is just so boring. (AS)



JAPANESE GAMERS ARE BIG FANS OF FISH-RELATED PRODUCT. AMONG THE TITLES VYING FOR INCLUSION WITHIN IMPORT ROUND-UP WAS A FISHING SIMULATOR.



ONE OF THE MANY STRANGE UNDERWATER OBJECTS YOU'LL ENCOUNTER AS YOU DIVE DEEPER.



OVERALL
53

KING'S FIELD



BY: From Software

The Japanese have released some excellent role-playing games. *The Final Fantasy* series is universally acclaimed, while *Zelda* is widely regarded as one of the best console RPGs to date. *King's Field* adopts a slightly different approach to the role-playing genre, using the first-person perspective usually associated with shoot 'em ups like *Doom*. It works well here, and it's surprisingly easy to explore the depths of Verdite during the search for the sacred Moonlight Sword.

Verdite, the mystical realm in which the game is set, is a land of many forms. The opening shores of Melanat island hide the vicious Kraken, while further into the game a towering man-eating plant protects the bridge leading to the next chapter of the game. Luckily swords, axes and other weaponry are in plentiful supply, and also a load of magic spells to learn and eventually cast. Novice magic users can muster enough energy to throw tiny fireballs but by the time you reach arch-mage you'll have the ability to engulf enemies in the awesome fire storm.

King's Field is a true role-playing game in the sense that as tasks are completed, enemies defeated and spells cast, your character is awarded experience points which total-up to make them more powerful. Skills are therefore perfected through practice, and as your characters becomes more adept they also become tougher, allowing them to fight the hellish monstrosities that surface later in the quest.

In terms of presentation *King's Field* isn't really that advanced. Although the landscapes are texture-mapped they are still fairly basic and aren't as detailed as, say, the blood-stained dungeons of *Doom*. The enemy creatures are pretty cool, most moving realistically and attacking with frightening ferocity. It the actual meat of the game itself that makes *King's Field* so absorbing though. Even though most of the text is written in Japanese it's still easy to pick up, taking just a few minutes to learn how to attack and cast spells. Conversations with other characters are obviously futile, but it's possible to progress steadily through the dungeon without any problems, or more importantly the aid of a translator. Unfortunately it looks as though *King's Field* will never appear officially in the UK, a shame considering it's a fine RPG. There's no choice but to buy it on import then – an expensive option, agreed, but one role-playing fanatics really



IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BATTLES AND GENERAL RPG MAYHEM, YOU STUMBLE ACROSS A SEEMINGLY HARMLESS FISHERMAN.

THE DUNGEONS ARE INCREDIBLY DETAILED, ALTHOUGH THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID FOR SOME OF THE MONSTERS.



OVERALL

84

HYPER FORMATION SOCCER



IMPORT ROUND-UP



BY: Human

Do you know what pain is? By now, you may be imagining

toothache or a severe burning sensation in your genitals, but real pain is only reached by playing a piece of shite like *Hyper Formation Soccer*. Forget every complaint leveled at *Striker* and *GoalStorm*, compared to Human's recently-imported bucket of crap they're up their with the greatest games of all time. What are its faults? Where shall I begin? Control over shooting and passing is over complex and results in a ball flying into orbit if the button is held down for a second too long, and the player is actually given control of two players at once with the second sprite mimicking the actions of the first — often with daft consequences. For example, if a player tonks the ball upfield the second player apes the kick, often laying out a defender in the process and earning themselves a yellow card.

Adding insult to the already considerable injury, is that the bare bones of gameplay is weaker than one-ply bog-roll. The aforementioned crap control system means that effective play is virtually impossible to pull off, and an odd system of swapping control to the goalie when you're least expecting it just adds to the misery. Human have made no attempt to tart the proceedings up with a multitude of viewpoints — a pity as a distant view (over a mile perhaps) would have made the disjointed and clunky sprites look far more impressive. We're promised that the PAL version will feature loads of improvements over this Japanese version, but it'll take a bloody miracle to get *Hyper Formation Soccer* anywhere close to respectability. A bag of utter dog shite. Without the bag. (SM)

PASSING AND KICKING ARE EASY ENOUGH TO EFFECT, BUT ACCURACY IS FAR TOO LIMITED.



THE GOALIES PROVE INCREDIBLY DIM, AND CONTROL SWITCHES OVER TO THEM WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.



BY PRESSING THE SELECT BUTTON DURING PLAY, ONE OF A NUMBER OF VIEWS AND DISTANCES CAN BE CHOSEN.

KICK OFF, AND THE CHUNKY SPRITES BEGIN TO LIMP AROUND THE SCROLLING FIELD.



PRIME GOAL EX



WHEN A GOAL HAS BEEN SCORED, A CLOSE-UP OF THE CELEBRATIONS IS SHOWN.



BY: Namco

Namco's *Prime Goal Ex* opts for arcade playability over the plentiful viewpoints, as once again PlayStation owners are invited to take part in a series of J-League matches and tournaments in search of glory and trophies. However, while the simplistic nature of the game does make it a pleasant enough kickaround, a certain finesse and playability are conspicuous by their absence.

Viewed from the side, *Prime Goal Ex* is graphically similar to countless forgettable footy coin-ops, with blocky sprites tonking the ball to and fro, with the occasional lob or pass to break things up. With Namco never pretending *Prime Goal Ex* was going to offer tactics and the like, this begins as a very reasonable kickaround, but passing and kicking are a little imprecise and shooting varies from easy to save to wildly inaccurate. As far as midfield action goes, *Prime Goal Ex* is fine. But whenever the action nears an opponent's goal, it proves extremely tough to actually get the ball into the net. Until you master the crossing and heading technique, that is. Yes, you've guessed it, alongside *GoalStorm* and *Striker '96*, Namco have inadvertently left a dead-cert method of scoring in their footy game. Granted, it takes longer to find than the pox-awful diagonal shot at goal of the Konami and Warner efforts, but once you've floated one cross in and headed it past the dim 'keeper, you'll soon find yourself following a repetitive pattern to assure goal-laden victories time and time again.

Prime Goal Ex's presentation (including a brilliant smarmy television commentator) indicates you're in for a game which is all set to be fast, furious and full of fouls. Sadly, none of these three Fs play a major part in the game. Fundamental flaws with the said goal system, a lack of pace at times, and a limited amount of shot styles makes *Prime Goal Ex* far more frustrating than it ever should be — and when you consider that it is an arcade-style kickaround as opposed to a FIFA-style nuts'n'bolts set-piece affair, immediate playability is the one thing you'd expect it to have. Ah well, at least PlayStation owners can find solace in the arms of the EA game (although Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* is the one we're still holding on for), but Namco can also be proud that — dull as *Prime Goal Ex* is — it's still miles better than *Hyper Formation Soccer*! (SM)



OVERALL
67

GOAL KICKS OFFER AN OVERVIEW OF THE PITCH, BUT THE ACCURACY OF THE ACTUAL KICK IS LIMITED.



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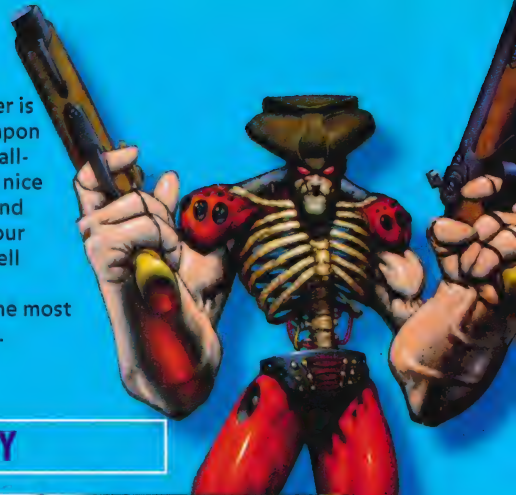
Loaded

Yeah, of course it's hard — if it was easy, you'd only moan. Then again, you're probably complaining because you can't get through the first level.

Well quit whining and slap in another ammo clip as *PlayStation Plus* uncovers invaluable tips and hidden secrets in the first instalment of our detailed *Loaded* walk-thru.

BUTCH IS BEST

Choosing the right character is essential. Out of the six, Capon Hands is arguably the best all-round character, offering a nice balance of speed, armour and weaponry. Personally I favour Butch, as he's fast, fairly well armoured and his chunky flamethrower is arguably the most effective weapon available.



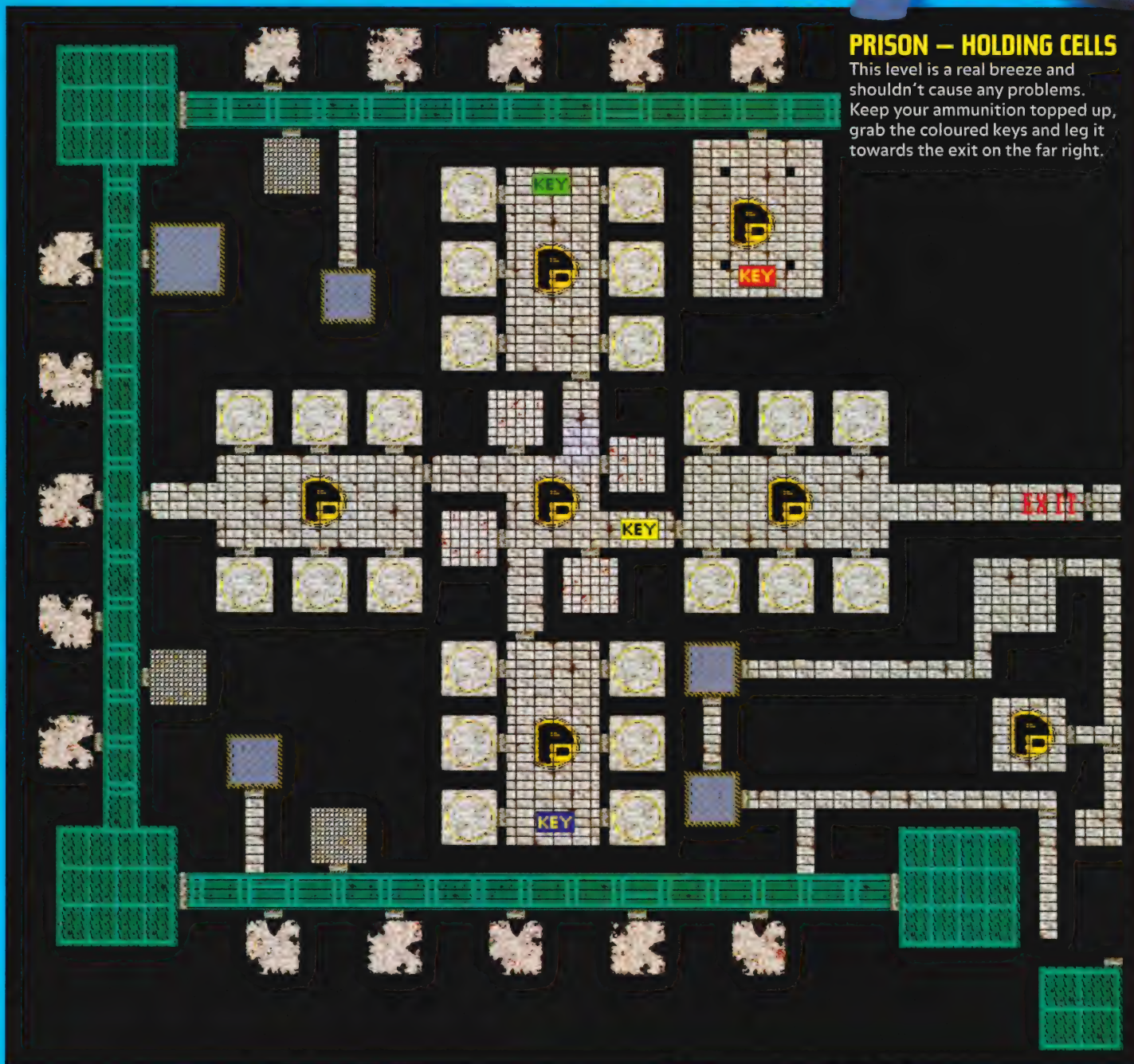
MAP KEY

Green key KEY	Teleporter
Blue key KEY	Yellow key KEY
Crates	Red key KEY



PRISON — HOLDING CELLS

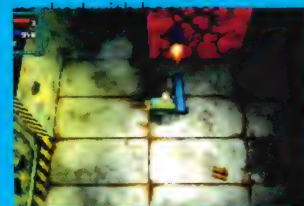
This level is a real breeze and shouldn't cause any problems. Keep your ammunition topped up, grab the coloured keys and leg it towards the exit on the far right.



PRISON — ADMINISTRATION LEVEL

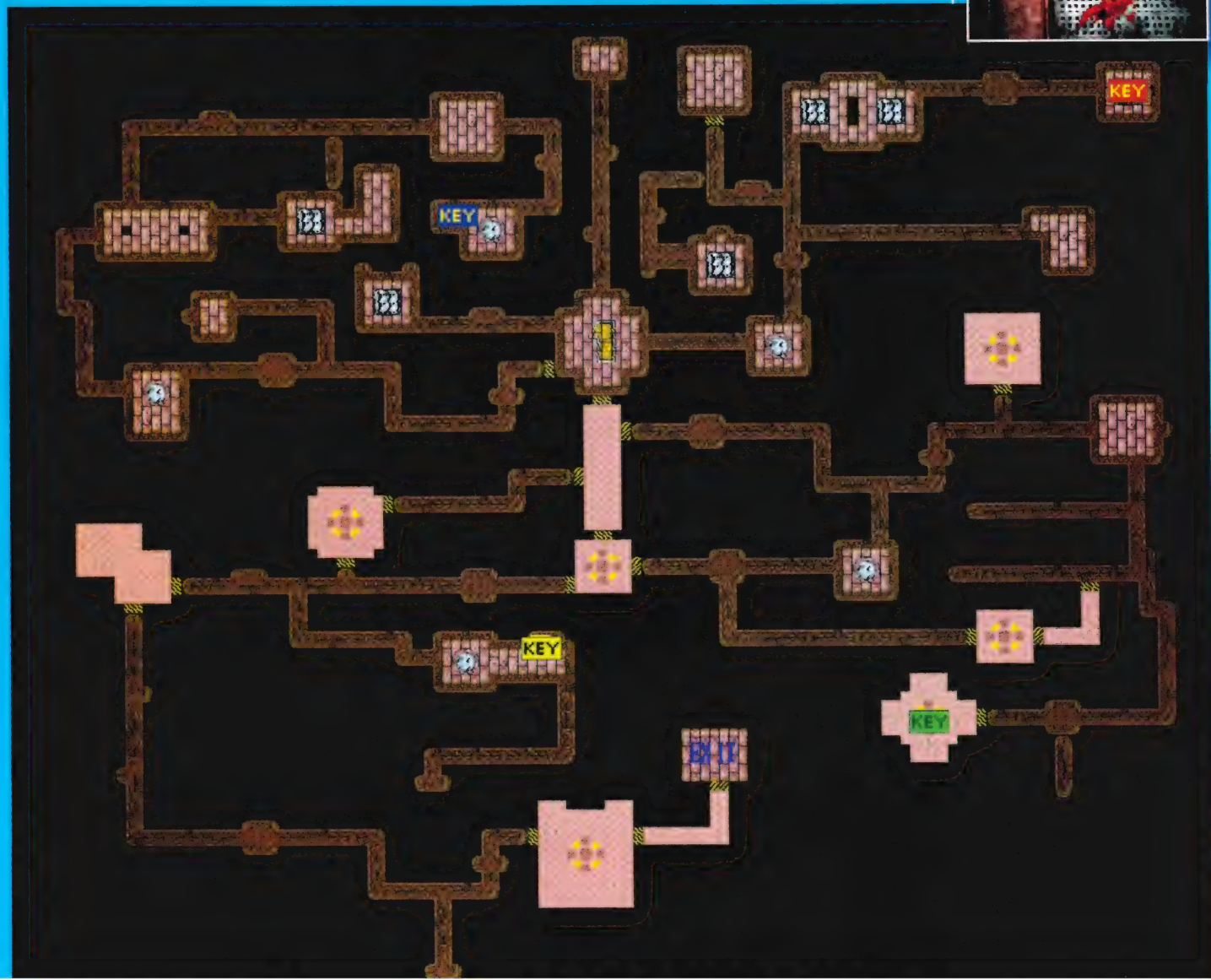
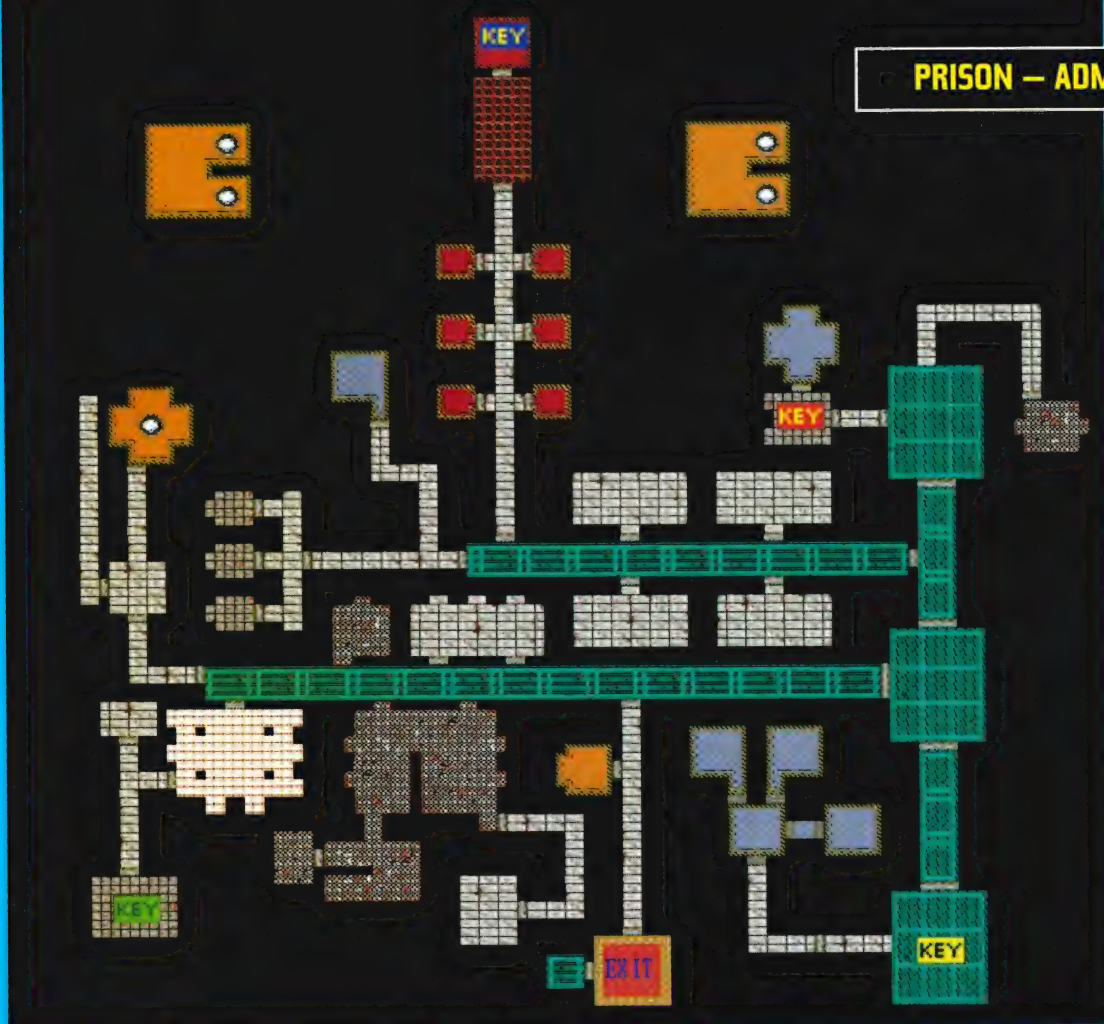
Again, this is another simple level. Your objective is to find the Governor's secret elevator which is located at the bottom of the map.

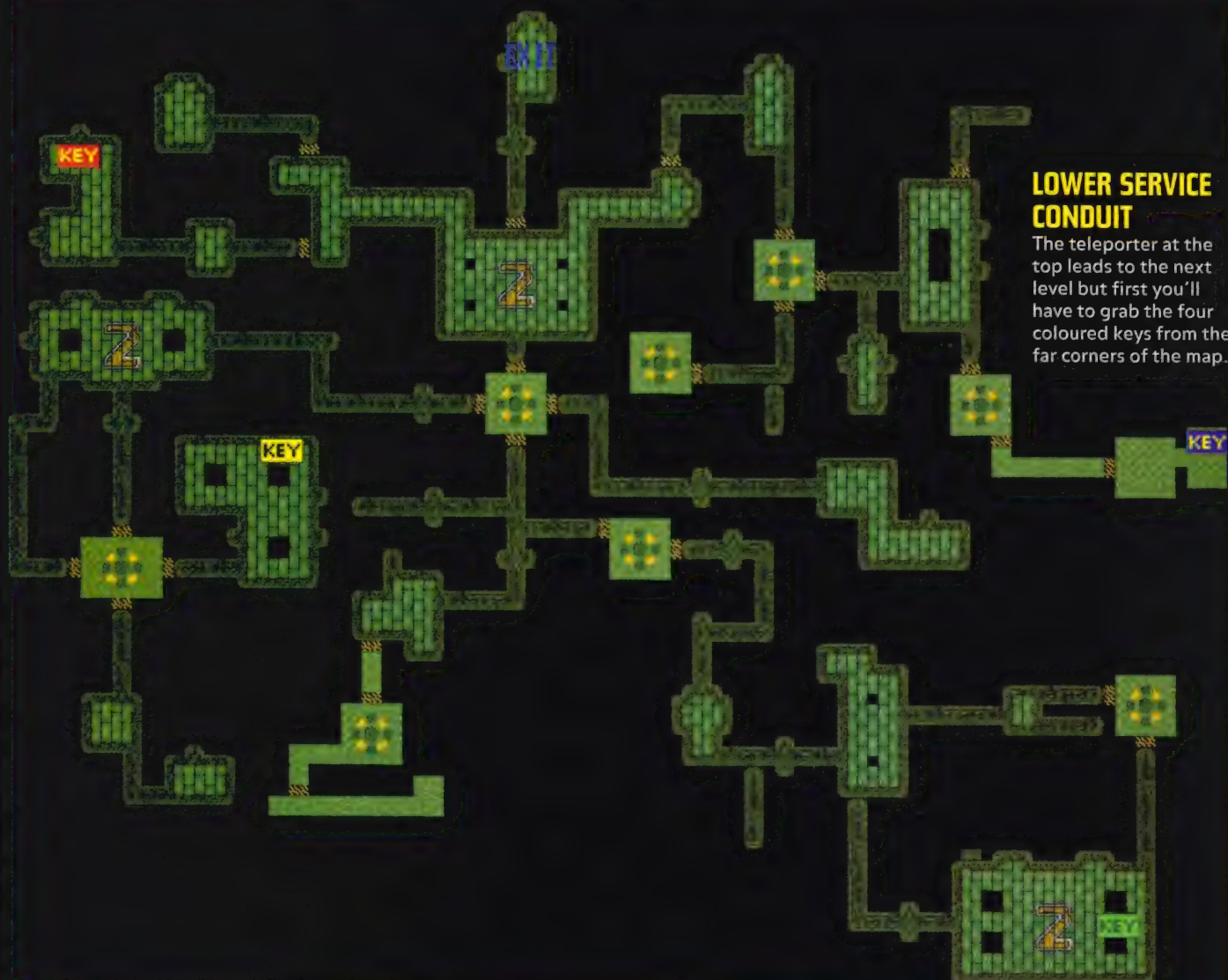
Just punch through the north wall, near the entrance, and step into the teleporter to find a room



UPPER SERVICE CONDUIT

Prepare yourself for a long walk because this level is huge. The keys are scattered far and wide, and it's only after a long hard fight that you'll reach the man-hole exit at the bottom.



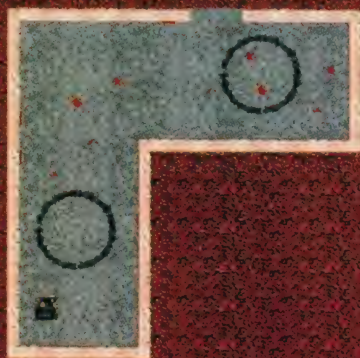


LOWER SERVICE CONDUIT

The teleporter at the top leads to the next level but first you'll have to grab the four coloured keys from the far corners of the map.

MAIN GATE

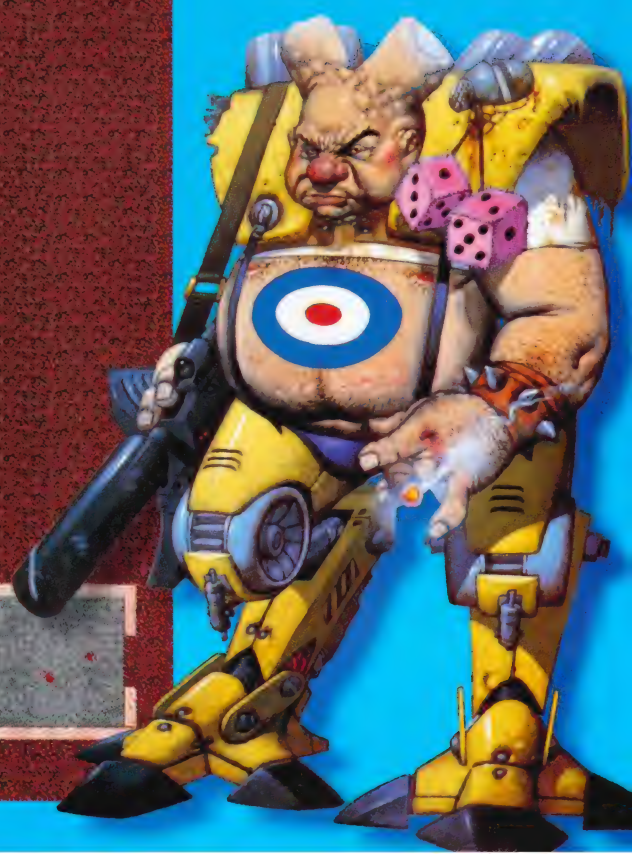
The exit is located to the south-east of the entrance point, although the direct route is blocked off by wire fences. From the opening chamber, run clockwise to reach the car in the concrete garage, but watch out for the rabid dogs — they can leap over the fences.



MAP KEY

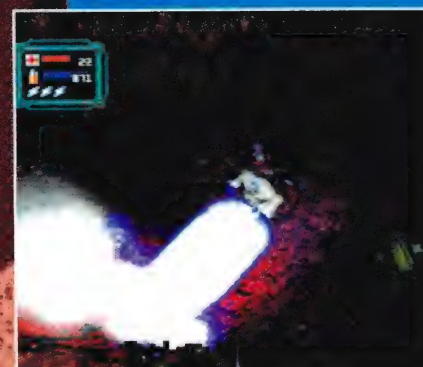
Green key 	Teleporter 
Blue key 	Yellow key 
Crates 	Red key 

EXIT



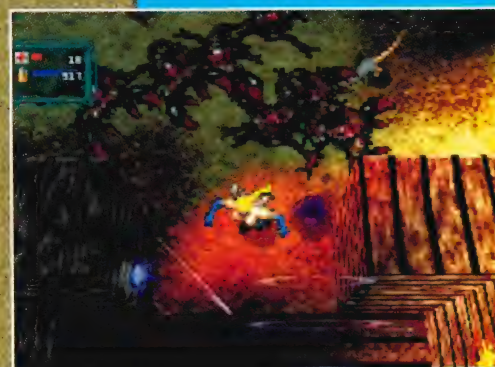
DESERT

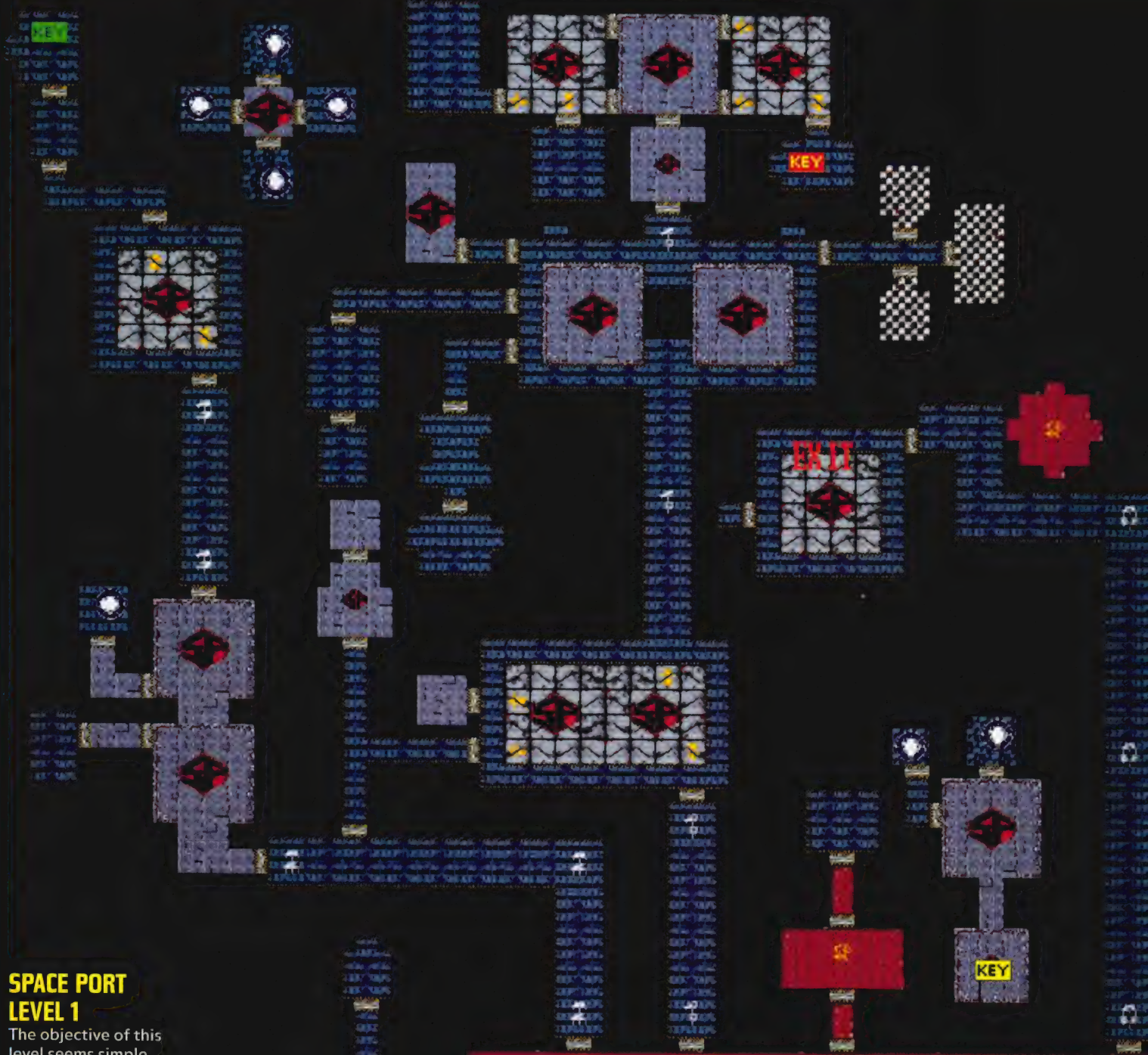
Your hover pod has run out of gas, leaving you no other option but to leave the safety of the vehicle and search for more. The scorpions are complete gits up close, so stay back and burn 'em with Butch's flamethrower.



BADLANDS

This graveyard is crawling with zombies — burn the bastards with the flamethrower. The secret teleporter you're searching for is situated in the centre of the crucifix-shaped mud plain and, unsurprisingly, the enemy is strongest here.





SPACE PORT LEVEL 1

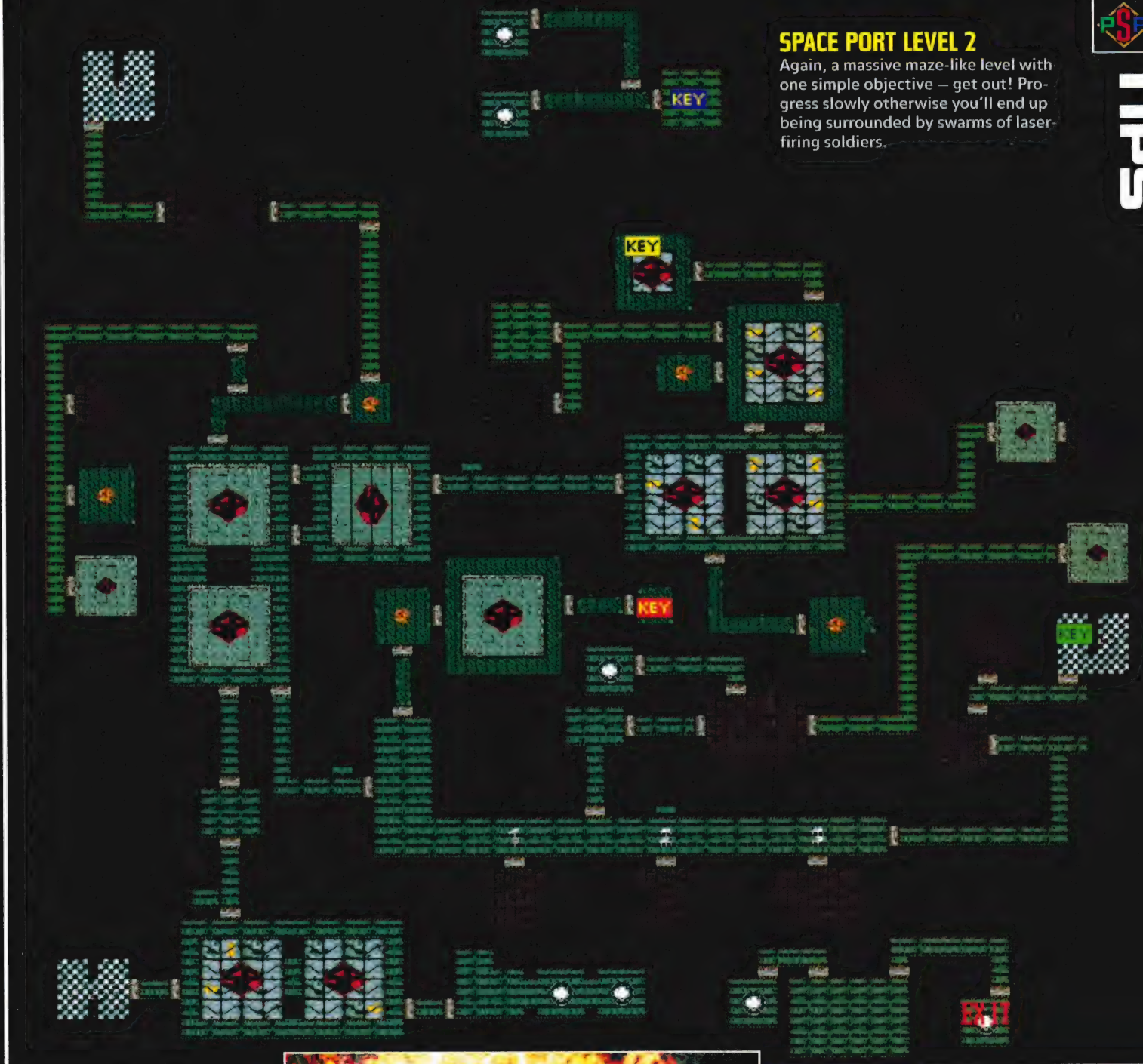
The objective of this level seems simple enough — find the exit. However, it's quite difficult because there are loads of monsters to destroy, corridors to explore and teleporters that lead to bonus-filled anti-chambers.

MAP KEY

Green key	Teleporter
KEY	
Blue key	Yellow key
KEY	KEY
Crates	Red key
	KEY

SPACE PORT LEVEL 2

Again, a massive maze-like level with one simple objective – get out! Progress slowly otherwise you'll end up being surrounded by swarms of laser-firing soldiers.



IN NEXT MONTH'S PLAYSTATION PLUS WE REVEAL THE REMAINING SIX LEVELS IN THE CONCLUDING INSTALMENT TO THE ULTIMATE LOADED GUIDE. JOIN US THEN.



Discworld

Anyone who knows Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels could tell you just how intricate and clever they are. The vast game is no different. If we wanted to offer a guide to get you through all of it we'd probably have to put about a hundred pages aside! Instead, here's some help with a few of those tasks likely to have you stumped in the earlier part of the game, and which act as good examples of the kind of lateral thinking necessary if you want to get this RPG over and done with!

A How do I get the Staff?

This is probably one of the easiest tasks in the whole of the game so we'll begin here. The staff is in fact right under your nose. The old duffer, Windle Poons, who sits mumbling in the dining room of the University actually holds it in his hand and you'll notice him firing lightning bolts from it when you go in. Having acquired the broom which you used to wake up the luggage, it's a simple matter of swapping the broomstick for the staff. You don't even need to distract Windle from his mumbling, because he's so docile.



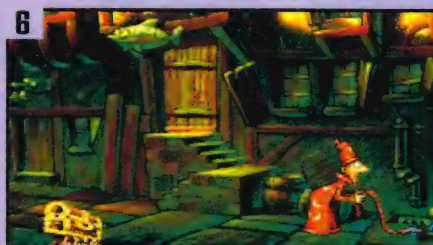
B How do I get the roller from the barber?

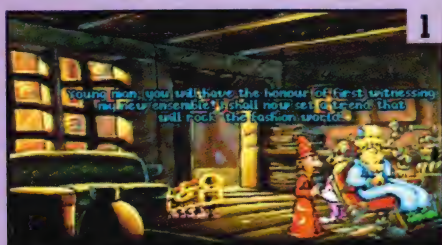
To get the roller from the barber shop (or the neverfailing coil as it's known) is an operation you'll have to do in stages. To begin with walk up to the woman and start talking with her. After she's finished jabbering away, click on the roller and start talking to her again. This time you'll find yourself persuading her to get straight hair. It works of course, so the barber then puts the roller in his pocket. But how do you get it from here? Quite simply, you have to learn the art of pick-pocketing. To do this, leave the barber shop and return to the square. Go and chat with the 'lovable street urchin'. After a bit of banter he tells you the art which you get to practice on the old men. This earns you a pair of bloomers which you can put in your inventory. Now return to the barber shop. This time chat with the barber. When he goes into a daydream about some lass he fancies, take the pick-pocketing skill out of Rincewind's personal inventory and click on the barbers pocket. Hey presto, the roller is yours!



C How do I get the little imp out of the camera?

The imp is in a camera at the Alchemists' place. This is situated in the alley, but before you head there you've got to go to the toy shop and pick up some toys and string. Next, head to the livery stable. You'll find this to the bottom-right of the map. Pick up the corn and head for the alley (make sure you avoid the magic paving stone that rockets you to the rooftops). Once you're in the Alchemists' place have a chat with the scientist. He claims to have invented moving pictures and a quick examination of the room reveals a camera with an imp inside it. Before you can take the imp, though, you need to create a distraction. Take the corn out of the luggage and use it on the flask (which is a kind of bunsen burner). Before you know it the scientist is hiding under the desk, there's popcorn everywhere and you're free to grab the imp. But, life being what it is, he escapes and runs out of the shop into a mouse hole. To entice him out take the string and the worm from your luggage, tie the worm onto the string and place it near the mouse hole. The imp can't resist, comes rushing out and you can grab it and put it in your inventory.





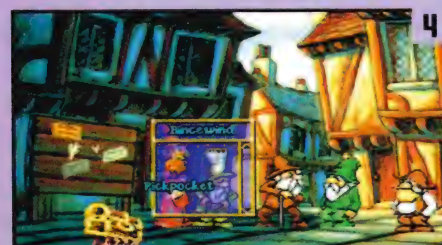
1



2



3



4



5

D How do I get the frying pan?

You're not going to be able to get the frying pan with the cook still there, so you've got to get rid of him somehow. The clue to how to do this is in the conversation you first have with him. He talks of how he is losing patience with all the supernatural goings on and threatens to complain. This is exactly what you want. The main problem is how to get him out of the kitchen, and to do this involves a meandering and rather complicated strategy. The first thing to do is leave the university and head to the Square. Go into the psychiatrist's building and sit down next to the troll. Above his head you'll see a net. You can't get to it because he's in the way so leave the psychiatrist and go to the veg stall. Pick up a tomato and throw it at the tax collector. Once you've done this, go and get another tomato. This time a worm falls out of it which you can then pick up and stick in the luggage inventory. Now walk back in to the psychiatrist. The middle seat is now empty and you can take the net. The next step involves going to the

Alley. This is where you want to get hold of a ladder. Walking down the alley step on to the magic paving stone which transports Rincewind to the rooftops. A wander around here reveals the ladder. Put it in the luggage inventory. After climbing through a window to get back to ground level head back to the university. You now have everything you need to get the cook out of the kitchen. Don't actually go in to the university, though. Instead, wander round the back until you get to a window with bags set up beneath it. Now put the net in Rincewind's personal inventory, take the ladder and click on the window. When the ladder is set up, Rincewind climbs to the top and peers in on to — guess where? — the kitchen. The cook is busy flipping a pancake. Take the net out of Rincewind's inventory and catch the pancake. When the pancake never comes down the cook gets very flustered and disappears from the kitchen to complain. Quickly run to the front, through the main entrance and into the kitchen where you'll find the frying pan sitting there for you to tuck away in the luggage inventory. Talk about round the houses.



1



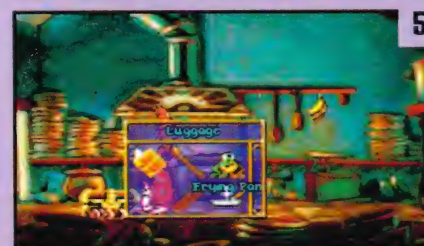
2



3



4



5

E How do I get the dragon's breath?

Again you're going to have to go a round-about sort of way to get the dragon's breath. First you need a mirror and this you'll get at the palace. Arriving at the palace, the two guards refuse to let Rincewind enter. Start a conversation with the fat guard and it causes him to get in an argument with the other who he then bashes. Walk into the palace and head for the door with the star on it. Inside is a bathroom and here you'll find the mirror hanging on the wall. Put this in Rincewind's personal inventory. Next go to the alley, and stand on the magic paving stone. Once among the rooftops (again) click on the tower and watch as Rincewind clammers up. When you're at the end of the flagpole take the mirror out of Rincewind's inventory and click it on the tip. This puts the mirror in place but nothing happens. You need to double click on the mirror again to move it so that it reflects light on to the dragon. Noticing it, the dragon flies over, checks himself out in the mirror and then breathes fire onto it, burning the cords and causing the mirror to fall conveniently into Rincewind's luggage below.



1



2



3



4

How do I discover the secret of L-Space?

L-Space is what enables Rincewind to go back through time and the portal is situated in the library. The only way to gain access to it is to give the librarian a golden banana which the sleazy guy happens to have tucked behind his ear. However, he'll only give you the banana for 'all the money in the world'.

Fortunately at the end of act one the treasure detecting device took Rincewind to the dragon's lair where he pocketed all the treasure. Hand this over to the sleazy guy. He then gives you the golden banana. Once you hand this over to the librarian he activates L-space and Rincewind is then free to pass back and forth through time.



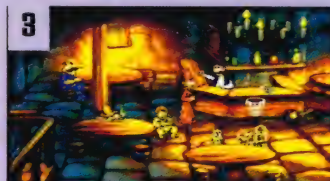
G

How do I get into the brotherhood's hideout?

Finding out just who the members of the brotherhood are involves getting in to one of their secret meetings. This is a long and tricky process but essential if you're going to find out what items you need from each of the brotherhood members. Here's where you've really got to get to grips with using L-Space. The first time you use it will result in your finding out exactly where the brotherhood's hideout is. So enter L-Space and travel back to the previous night. When you emerge, hang about and wait for the thief to arrive. He steals the dragon-summoning book and makes his escape through the hidden door behind the bookcase into the city. Follow him out and you'll see him heading across the map to the bottom-right corner where the hideout is situated. Now you've discovered where the hideout is, your next problem is getting in. You need both a disguise and the secret password. Your disguise is a robe but getting this involves some more obscure puzzle solving. Stay in the past and head to the park. There you'll find yourself lying on a park bench sleeping off the effects of counterwise wine. Take the frog out of your inventory

and place it over the snoring mouth of your double who then swallows it (that's how it came to pop out of your mouth in the university garden earlier in the game!). This causes the butterfly hovering about your head to fall down into reach. Grab it with the butterfly net and stick it in your inventory. Now, staying in the past, go to the street and walk to the corner where the monk stands during the day. Take the butterfly out of the inventory and place it over the lamp. As the intermission sequence explains, this causes the weather to change in the future, drenching the monk who then has to disrobe. Return to the university and travel back through L-Space to the present. When you go to the street corner this time you'll see the monk standing there in his underwear proving that it's worked. His robes are drying down the alley next to the fishmongers stall. Once you've collected these you have your disguise. The next task is to discover the password that lets you enter one of the brotherhood meetings. Again, some pretty abstract thinking is needed. After you've picked up the robe, travel to the Broken Drum pub. Go

up to the bar and examine the drinks on display. One of them is counterwise wine – the same foul brew you found yourself sleeping off on the park bench earlier. Go to the barman and ask for a glass of this. After Rincewind has drunk it he is still holding the glass. Put this in the inventory. Now go back to the hole which leads to the library and travel back through L-Space again to the night before. Head to the Brotherhood's hideout and go and adjust the drainpipe so it faces the door. Next, hide behind the wall to the right and wait for the thief to arrive. Take out the glass from your inventory and use it on the drainpipe next to you. Rincewind leans in with the glass to his ear and is able to hear the password. After the thief has been allowed in, walk to the door, put the monk's robe on and use the door knocker. After a bit of banter, Rincewind is allowed to enter and you can now discover more about the brotherhood members – the Fool, the Fishmonger, the Thief, the Dunnyman, the Stonemason, and the Chimney Sweep – and what items you need to acquire from each of them. Thus ends another long-winded puzzle.



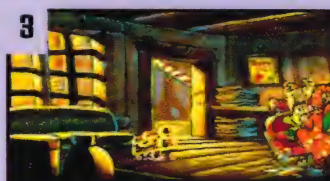
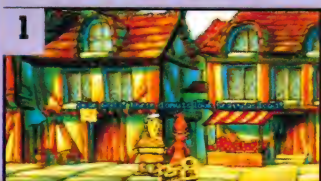
H

How do I get the Dunnyman's gold tooth?

The Dunnyman is situated in an alley off the square where he tends to a waste recycling machine. Go to the trader Dibbler first and buy some doughnuts. Take these to the Dunnyman in the alley and offer him one. He eats it and then runs off with toothache. He's actually gone to the barbers who also

doubles as a dentist. Don't go there yet. First go to the Psychiatrickerist and talk to the woman. She gives Rincewind a love letter to give to her fella who happens to be the barber. Now go to the barbers in the Street and hand him the letter. He rushes off to find her leaving you in charge of the

shop with the Dunnyman sitting there. Click on the apparatus and Rincewind starts to extract the Dunnyman's tooth which pops out shiny and gold! Put this in the inventory and away you go!



As for the rest, well you're just going to have to use some of your own grey matter. Remember this, though – dragons only exist if you believe in them! And from here, it's all plain sailing.

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'Full Motion Video' used in games. Shit or what? Discuss.

It's a common-held belief that 'one day' (a nebulous term if ever there was one) games players will be able to interact with movies. Hmmm. The theory continues that as the gap between Hollywood and game developers is reduced, game and movie developers will work together to create adventures where the player is the hero who sees the assorted filmed sections through 'their' eyes. The reasoning then continues with the illusion that any part of the scene could be viewed from any angle, allowing for a completely free-falling virtual movie location. Yes, and all food will come on little pills which taste like roast chicken/a bacon sarnie/chips, etc.

Let's be honest, FMV game/movie crossovers are a bit shite. Or rather, they have been as, courtesy of EA/Origin's forthcoming *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger*, things could be looking up at last. What was once the domain of crap actors who ordinarily would only be seen serving drinks in the party scene of Costner or Arnie's latest blockbuster, now finds established screen heroes such as Christopher Walken, Dennis Hopper and Luke Skywalker himself, Mark Hamill, offering the player advice during one of the high-budgeted intermission scenes. Not AA stars, true. But it's a start.

Of all the companies currently working towards the glorious day when games and films will crossover easily, EA and their Origin partnership are the closest. As their *Wing Commander* series continues, the budgets and games are getting steadily better and — inevitably — a *Wing Commander* film is now on the cards. But are FMV games really the future? Can the addition of movie scenes to a barely interactive point'n'click adventure really make it any better? Do we want a game where we are asked to press the directional pad in a fancy-looking game of multiple choice when *Worms* and its minuscule sprites but supreme gameplay are on offer?

As we take an early look at the Sony conversion of *Wing Commander III*, PlayStation Plus offers the case for and against FMV games, and looks into the future and how big a part it plays in game-playing, and traces its less than inspiring past. Roll 'em.



BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG KITTY

FULL MOTION VIDEO GAMES: A RAW DEAL?



WING COMMANDER III

HEART OF THE TIGER



even years after the first *Wing Commander* appeared to wow owners of a

(then) spanking new 386 PC, the series has drifted on to each of the new wave of machines, through Amigas, Mega-CD, the Super NES, and now the PlayStation. However, as head of design, Chris Roberts, and his army of programmers started planning their third battle against the Kilrathi, they had more up their sleeves than simple 3D blasting — they wanted to create a game which, as so many other promised, successfully blended space dog fighting with FMV sequences. To this end, Origin stumped up the necessary \$3m and the recruiting for actors began. Realising that past FMV efforts had failed in part because of the low standard of acting talent on board, Roberts and his team desperately wanted a 'star' name to headline *Wing Commander III* — and with Gametek employing Dennis Hopper for their PC adventure, *Quarantine*, the chosen lead had to be instantly recognisable, but still within a certain budget. After much searching, the lead role of Colonel Christopher Blair was awarded to Mark Hamill who, let's face it, everyone knows as Luke Skywalker and can hardly be called busy of late. A greater coup, though, was Origin's signing of Malcolm McDowell as Blair's boss, Admiral Tolwyn — perfect timing, as McDowell was set to appear in a brace of films ranging from *Star Trek: Generations* to *Tank Girl*.

With the rest of the cast made up of relative unknowns (and porn queen Ginger Lynn Allen — star of *Bondage: A Love Story*), the latest battle against the feline Kilrathi warmongers gradually took shape. Now, a mere eight months after its PC debut, *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger* is nearing the end of its translation to the PlayStation.

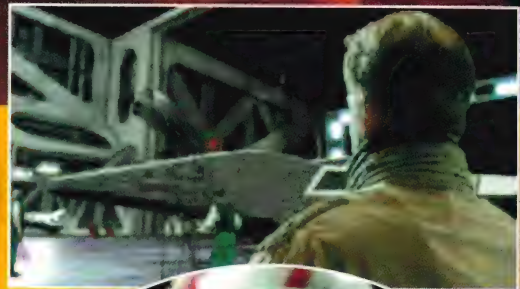
It's an ambitious project, with over thirty button combinations needed to pilot your ship, and constant interaction between your crew and co-pilots to keep up to date with Kilrathi events. And then there's the secret at the heart of the Kilrathi empire to uncover...

COMPANY	EA
RELEASE	MARCH
PRICE	£44.99
PLAYERS	1
GENRE	SHOOT 'EM UP

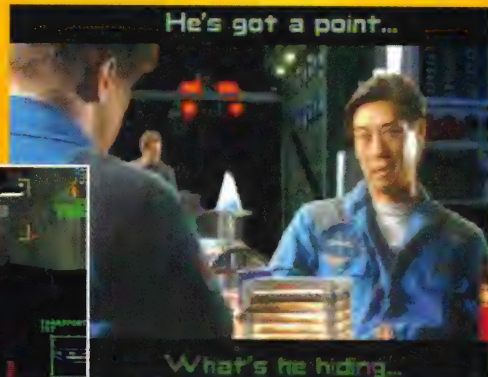


TOTAL CONTROL

In terms of control system, Origin are pushing the PlayStation pads to their limits. While within the ship (a Hellcat V) and talking to the other characters, control is limited to pressing the X button to change location or talk to someone else via a simplistic icon system, entering space is a completely different kettle of mullet. The player's ship is armed with missiles and lasers, which are activated using the square and circle buttons respectively. However, in order to communicate with your fleet and base, combinations of the four face buttons

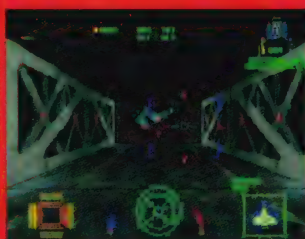
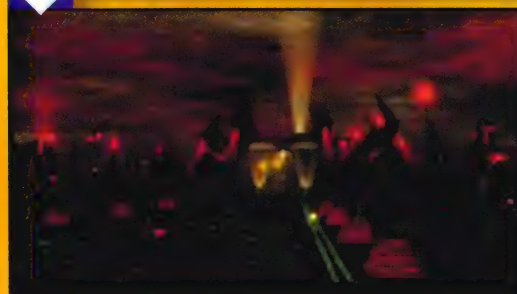


and the L and Rs on the top of the pad soon come into play. As such, as you battle the Kilrathi, locking on missiles is a matter of pressing L1 and the triangle button, while entering the navigation computer is L2 and Select. In all, over fifty different actions await your command — and there's even an option for mouse control if required.



STORY-TELLING...

For the uninitiated, the *Wing Commander* series details the ongoing battle between man and the lion-like Kilrathi race. By this third instalment, the war has been raging for years, and things are starting to go badly for the Terran Confeds. The Kilrathi have scored a major coup by felling the TCS Concordia — one of your fleet's flagship bases — and the game begins with the player (controlling Hamill's Blair character) assigned to a decrepit carrier, the TCS Victory. As such a high-flying pilot, Blair feels the move is effectively a demotion, and initially resents the move. However, as the game progresses and battles are fought, more twists and turns in the plot rear their unexpected heads — as do a couple of budding relationships for Blair...



SWITCHING BETWEEN THE CAMERA VIEWS IS NOT RECOMMENDED DURING THE COURSE OF A BATTLE, BUT LOOK STUNNING WHEN APPROACHING LARGER OBJECTS SUCH AS KILRATHI MINE LAYING SHIPS.

MOB HANDED

Blair is ably assisted (and hindered) by his wing people, back-up team and those-who-must-be-obeyed. Of these, a few are notable by past television and cinema work, but all play an integral part in the battle against the Kilrathi. It's a little bit like *Top Gun* meets *Buck Rogers* in the 25th Century meets *EastEnders*, and, to quote *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum* (sort of), you will be watching...



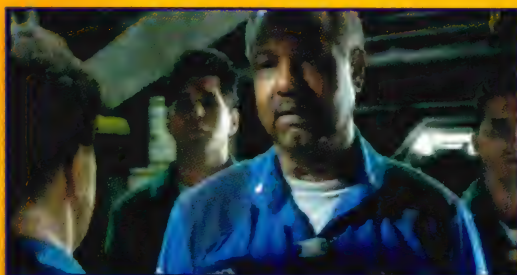
COLONEL CHRISTOPHER BLAIR

As played by Mark Hamill, and the player's character throughout the game.



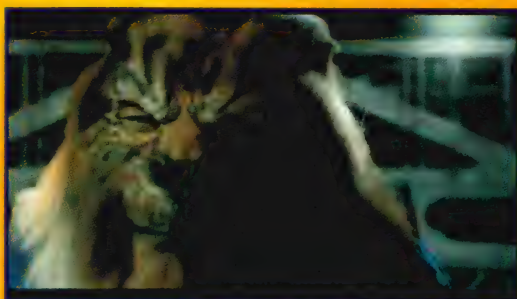
ADMIRAL TOLWYN

Malcolm McDowell takes a break from *Caligula* and *Tank Girl* to assume the role of the aloof big cheese on the Victory.



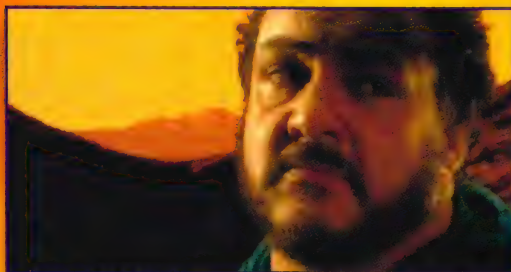
EISEN

Used to be in V, but now dishes out the missions against the Kilrathi. Tough on Blair, but it's for his own good.



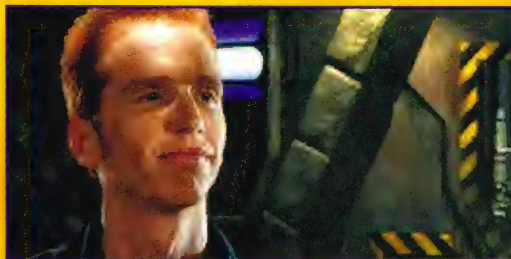
HOBBS

A Kilrathi warrior who has defected, opting instead to work towards a peaceful end to the war. Blair's main wingman, but not trusted by the majority of humans on board. Named after Bill Watterson's cartoon cat.



PALADIN

Instantly recognisable from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but only seen briefly as Blair and Paladin watch the TCS Concordia explode on the horizon. Apparently, Paladin is Blair's long-time confidante.



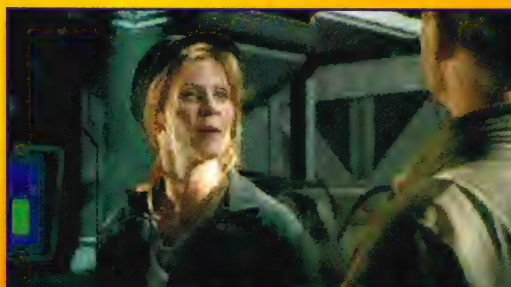
ROLLINS

Wing Commander III's equivalent of Uhura. The communications expert, and always worth talking to for the latest gossip doing the rounds.



MANIAC

Aka Biff from *Back to the Future*. If Blair is Tom Cruise's Maverick from *Top Gun*, Maniac is Wing Commander's Ice Man.



RACHEL

Ginger Lynn Allen — star of more than a handful of porn flicks — finds herself unusually overdressed in a boiler suit as she dons the mantle of the ship's engineer.



COBRA

One of the more enigmatic members of the team, who holds a long-term grudge against the Kilrathi. They obviously killed her family, then.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Naturally, the fate of the Terran Confederacy lies with Blair and with Hobbes as his wingman/cat, a number of increasingly taxing missions await the pair. Anyone familiar with past *Wing Commanders* will recognise the warm-up stages wherein Blair must simply locate and destroy a handful of Kilrathi craft before moving on to the next way point and eventually back to the Victory, but later stages really hot things up. For example, Blair is charged with guarding a freighter as it plods its way to a hyperspace entrance, while prevention is better than cure when the Kilrathi's convoy of plague missiles must be intercepted. Further mission information can be gleaned from Hobbes and other ships in the area, and *Wing Commander III* tries to build upon the atmosphere generated by the FMV scenes by having the pilots in constant contact with each other — Hobbes, for example, will scoot off to round up enemy fighters while the Kilrathi break radio silence to goad you into attack.



IT'S A BLAST

The space battle scenes are reminiscent of those of countless 3D blasters of old. Seated within your ship, the action is viewed through a small window, with your controls arranged at the bottom of the screen. Having listened to criticisms of the original PC version, Origin have reduced the ship's cockpit detail to the bare essentials to ensure a better overview of the action, and the necessary radar equipment, missile inventory and messaging system is overlaid into the corners of the screen — completely dispensing with the rather pointless overlay of the pilot's knees which graced the PC version! Having used the given way points to locate the Kilrathi fleets, the player then uses Auto-Pilot to jump to their position. Kilrathi ships are automatically displayed on the radar as red blobs, and all that remains is to get a lock on with your missiles or pursue them with your on-board lasers. During the course of the action, hardened veterans also have the option to pan around their ship using the three outside views, but it's only really recommended to space nutters.



FMV: A HISTORY

The FMV genre dates as far back as 1982 when ex-Disney animator, Don Bluth, created a cartoon-quality laser CD game called *Dragon's Lair*. This recounted the adventures of Dirk the Daring as he battled an evil dragon called Singe in a rescue mission to save the buxom Princess Daphne. While the game was a massive success (mainly due to the novelty value) its playability was limited to moving the joystick or pressing buttons at exactly the right time — get it wrong, and one of the death sequences played. This trait continued through a handful of sequels and spinoffs (*Space Ace* and *Super Don Quixote*), but other companies were quick to jump on the band wagon — most notably Atari with a game based (and using scenes) from the Clint Eastwood movie, *Firefox*.

With the advent of CD technology in the home — and Sega's doomed Mega-CD in particular — FMV games became the vogue again. Sega themselves kicked it all off with the awful *Thunderforce* and *Road Avenger* (both are now vying for a Sony release), and recruited FMV specialists, Digital Pictures, for a handful of 'interactive movies'. The first of these was the now infamous *Night Trap* which featured girls having their blood sucked out by men in boiler suits, starred Kimberly from *Diff'rent Strokes*, and caused such a fuss it ended up on *News at Ten*. Again a total lack of playability was apparent, but Digital Pictures continued unabashed releasing

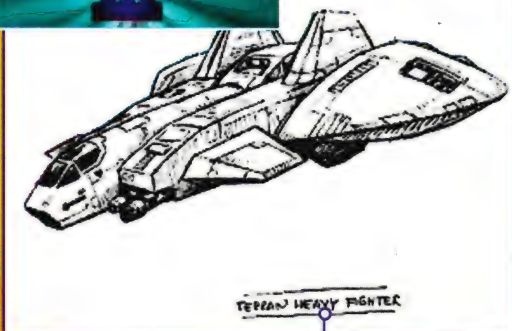
Double Switch (starring Debbie Harry), *Corpse Killer* (zombie fodder), and *Ground Zero Texas* (released by a pre-PlayStation Sony).

The games always fell at the interaction hurdle, though. Gameplay was reduced to hopeful pressing of buttons and never really over-stretched a multiple-choice puzzler. The likes of Lucasarts and Sierra had a crack with *Rebel Assault* and *Phantasmagoria* respectively, but it was with the advent of *Wing Commander III* — which, ironically, only used FMV for linking scenes — to make FMV scenes a viable option in a video game. But with gameplay always the stumbling block for FMV titles, will we ever see a fully interactive movie? EA think so, and have *Wing Commander IV* in the pipeline along with the star-studded *The Darkening* (with Christopher Walken working alongside the likes of John Hurt and Clive Owen), while SIE are busy putting the finishing touches to a FMV game based on the forthcoming Keanu Reeves actioner, *Johnny Mnemonic*. Only time will tell, though, if playability will out.



BEHIND THE SCENES AT DIGITAL PICTURE'S LARGEST FMV 'MOVIE' TO DATE — *GROUND ZERO TEXAS*. AGAIN, THOUGH, IT WAS REVEALED TO BE A MINOR MULTIPLE-CHOICE GAME WITH THE OCCASIONAL SHOOTING GALLERY SECTION.





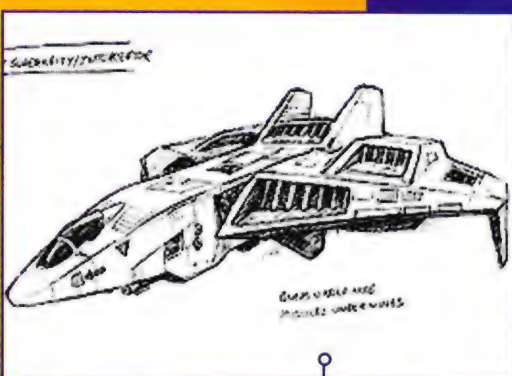
TEREAN HEAVY FIGHTER

THESE CONCEPT SKETCHES HELPED THE DESIGNERS VISUALISE THE GAME BEFORE PRODUCTION BEGAN.



KILRATHI INTERCEPTOR
MEDIUM FIGHTER
LARGE ENGINE AND COOLING
SMALL WINGS AND COOLING POD

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE KILRATHI INTERCEPTORS. FIRST THE SHIPS WERE SKETCHED OUT...



...THEN COMPLEX 3D MODELS WERE DESIGNED ON COMPUTER AND THE FINAL DETAILS ADDED.



MARK HAMILL'S JUMP SUIT IS SURPRISINGLY COMPLEX. HMM, LOOKS LIKE A BOILER SUIT TO ME...

HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD

If ever there was a Steven Spielberg of the computer world, Chris Roberts is definitely him. Born in California and raised in Manchester, England, Roberts is the creator of the *Wing Commander* series and is practically responsible for the whole interactive movie genre. Paving the way ahead with the primitive *Wing Commanders I and II*, it was with *Wing Commander III* that Roberts was finally given his dream – a massive 3 million dollar budget to create the ultimate interactive movie.

Penned by professional Hollywood script writers, *Wing Commander III* is a far cry from the shallow FMV abominations of the past. Its plot is compelling and provides the foundations for a gripping interactive movie. Famous actors like Malcolm McDowell and Mark Hamill give the game character the player can relate to while special effects teams helped bring the cat-like Kilrathi to life. More importantly, Roberts and his team didn't overlook the action sequences either, so *Wing Commander III* is just as enjoyable to play as it is to watch.

But as cinematically stunning as it is, *Heart of the Tiger* still didn't fulfil Roberts' desires to produce the definitive interactive movie. After the PC version of *Wing III* shipped over 500,000 copies worldwide it was time to take the next step. With a record-breaking \$8 million budget, work began on *Wing Commander IV* earlier this year. Forget the green-screen computer-generated backdrops and grainy video images, for *Wing Commander IV* all the stops have been pulled out. The game is being filmed on real Hollywood sets in 35mm, and as Mark Hamill agrees "it's much more like regular movie". Due for release on the PC just before Christmas, *Wing Commander IV* should hopefully appear on the PlayStation some time next year depending on Origin's decision to see how feasible the project is.

With the thin line between games and movies becoming increasingly seamless, it's no real surprise that there's a *Wing Commander* film in the pipeline. As yet details are scarce, but with Chris Roberts' ambitions heading towards Hollywood I wouldn't be surprised to see him sitting in the director's chair. Who knows, he might even be the next George Lucas...



THIS IS ONE OF THE EARLY DESIGN SKETCHES ON WHICH THE KILRATHI COSTUMES WERE BASED.

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FHM

It's a guy thing

PLUS POINTS



Welcome to a surprisingly intelligent edition of *Plus Points*. As requested the "my machine is better" and "please put these into order of greatness" have been banished. So join us into the world where, even with the aforementioned topics banned, people are still incredibly dim. It makes you wonder, it really does...

Send your views and questions to:
Plus Points,
PlayStation Plus,
 Priory Court,
 30-32 Farringdon Lane,
 London,
 EC1R 3A

SCOUSE ABUSE

First, my thanks to A J Beaman (Mr, Miss, Moron?) for informing me of what a filthy, thieving city I come from. It certainly opened my eyes, so I think I'll move from this city/open prison. Listen mate, ignore the stereotypes cast out by certain tabloids, we're not a city of Jimmy Corkhills you know. The above unpleasantness out of the way, huzzah to your new magazine, EMAP again shows how publishing should be done!

Andy Durney, Liverpool

Of course Liverpool isn't a city of Jimmy Corkhills, everyone looks like Ian Rush.

PC-ING IN THE WIND

I was with some mates last week, one of which owns a PC. He spent the entire day trying to convince me not to get a PlayStation but spend a total fortune (which I haven't got) getting some ridiculously complicated PC setup. I'm not going to do that, but he has got me thinking. I really love certain PC games, especially the LucasArts ones, will any of these make it to the PlayStation. Also, he says he can upgrade his machine any time he wants so it will never go out of date. All he goes on about is how I'll have to throw my PlayStation in the bin after twelve months.

Robert Sugden, Leeds

Sure, the PC's upgradable. What your 'mate' didn't tell you is that every time he upgrades his PC it'll cost more than a new PlayStation. So what if you can't upgrade a console? A PlayStation is a fifth of the price of a new PC, and many top titles such as *WipeOut* and *Destruction Derby* are only now being converted - and they're no better than the original. And don't worry about missing out on top PC titles, most of the big name developers are planning to port their top titles over the PlayStation.

LANGUAGE TROUBLE

I was having a good look through your second issue and, having seen the pictures of *Streetfighter II: The Movie* and *Streetfighter Alpha*, I began to sing and dance with joy. But my happiness was soon disrupted by the comment in the *SF: The Movie* review stating that there is "no version of *Street Fighter II* on the horizon." Please enlighten me.

S Turner

Hmm, is English your first language? No parlo inglese? Actually, you're right. When we say there's no sign of a PlayStation version of *SFII*, we mean that. *SF Alpha* is imminent, but not the original version. Hmm, that took some working out, didn't it...

MICROMIND

I have just finished reading Issue Two and was gobsmacked by some of your reviews.



Am I to understand that *Novastorm* is the sequel to *Microcosm*? Also I would like to know if there will be PlayStation conversions of *Microcosm* and *Flashback*?

Colin Edge, Droitwich

You can understand all you want, *Novastorm* is still crap. And so's *Microcosm*, which is just as well as it won't be coming out on the PlayStation. As for *Flashback*, as good a game as it is, you'll only see the follow-up, *Fade To Black*, for the PlayStation.



VIRTUA COP-OUT

Looking through the letters pages of some of the other mags, one thing is consistent, and that's the endless Saturn vs PlayStation debate. I can't believe that people actually waste their time writing that stuff. Let's hope that *PlayStation Plus*' letters pages don't get bogged down with this kind of stuff. A Q+A section would be a good idea, though, as long as it wasn't bogged down with 'can you put these games in order of best to worse' questions. I mean, who are these people? Can't they read reviews. I think *Virtua Cop* is a great game, but buying a console on the strength of one game is pointless, so I bought a PlayStation. Will there be any games like it coming out for the PS?

Richard Manley, Cardiff

There isn't anything sadder than the 'my machine's better than yours' debate. You never hear people going around saying my Cortina's better than your Hillman Avenger, do you? So we won't be printing any of that stuff. In the meantime, the only *Virtua Cop*-type game coming out is *Revolution X*. Which is shite.

NOVA AND OUT

One minor quibble I have with your magazine is that you are too generous with your marks. Take *Novastorm*, the reviewers obviously thought it was awful, but still scored it over 50. I would have thought a mark below 20 would have been more appropriate judging by their comments. It was the same with *Zeitgeist*. The review said that the game was bad, and then gave it a mark of 43! Be brave. If a game stinks, give it a suitably low mark to warn us about it.

I've got a bit of techie question for you. If I get a Sony SCART lead that doesn't use the audio (L and R) sockets on the back, can I still use the audio sockets to connect to my stereo, so I get sound out of my television and stereo at the same time.

Steve Loat, Basingstoke

When a game is bad enough to score in that realm, you're not going to buy it anyway. There isn't a person out there who'd touch a game which scored 50%. In the case of *Novastorm*, although its playability is about as welcome as finding a month-old BigMac in your bed, the graphics are up to spec. It's still

no reason to buy it and, if anyone's still unsure, they can read the reviewer's comment, that's what it's there for. As for your techie-spod question, yes you'll be able to connect it up to your television and stereo.



STROLLING BONES

I recently bought a PlayStation and I'm delighted with it - *WipeOut* being my favourite game to date. I'm also impressed with the number of games being produced for it. However, all the software being released for it is just that - games. Will there be any titles such as *Star Trek: The Omnipedia*, or the *Rolling Stones Voodoo Lounge* CD-ROM which are out on PC? I believe there is a demand for such software amongst PlayStation owners. Will there be any?

Fraser Mitchell, Hamilton

The PlayStation is first and foremost a games machine. That's what Sony set out to design and that's what they delivered. However, there's no telling what will be produced a year for now. It's unlikely that the CD-ROMs you've mentioned will ever appear though, primarily because they're designed to be used with a keyboard.

THE NEED FOR SENSE

I thought your first issue was excellent, especially the feature where you opened up a PlayStation and showed the insides. It really convinced me to buy one. I still have a few questions, though:

1. When you save a game on the memory card, do have to load the game back in to get to

where you left off, or do you do it without the game?

2. Will Electronic Arts be releasing *The Need For Speed* on the PlayStation?

James Taylor, Staffs

It's good to see that with all this great software around, an unflattering picture of a circuit board is enough to get you to part with



your cash. As for your questions, well EA currently have no plans to release *The Need For Speed*, and use your noggin' about the memory card. A CD can store over 600Mb of information, so how could one puny memory card hold an entire game?

POSTERS? POSTERS?

First, I'd like to congratulate you on bringing the UK one of the smartest-looking mags yet, but there's still room for improvement. You could put posters in future issues once in a while, charts would be a good idea, and a price list for either most of the games coming out before Christmas/New Year or for peripherals such as the MPEG adaptor, memory cards, and other controllers.

Now for the main part of my letter which are a handful of questions I have for you:

1. When is the MPEG adaptor due for release, and how much will it cost?
2. What other games are coming out for the PlayStation before March as opposed to those shown in Issue 2?
3. Where you place the PlayStation is relation to the likes of Mega-CD, 3DO, Jaguar, etc?
4. Will there be educational multimedia packages for the PlayStation?
5. Are Sony planning a handheld game system at all?
6. Which films are expected for the PlayStation: *Mortal Kombat*, *Street Fighter*, *Alien 3* or 4?

Richard Hardiker, Bolton

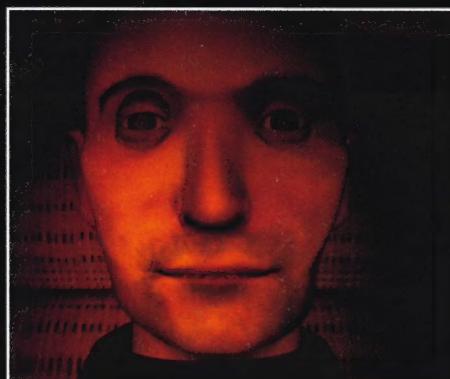
These are just the letters we are trying to avoid. Out of your six questions, only two are worth answering. First of all, the reason we put the bloody mag together is to reveal what games are coming out and when, do you honestly think we're going to waste space by listing them all here? If we didn't rate the PlayStation that highly, don't you think you'd be reading *3DO Plus* right now? Sony have no plans for a handheld, and why should they? A handheld would hardly have CD capabilities would it? Jeez. And as for what films will be MPEG compatible, when there's even the slightest glimmer of the card on the horizon we'll let you know. We're not holding back info, you know. No, there are no plans for educational software. And we hate posters: they're cheap and shitty, and we'd only do them with a gun held against our temples!

NEXT MONTH

1996: THE YEAR OF THE PLAYSTATION...



Having already established itself as the premier home entertainment system, next year, the PlayStation is set to play host to literally hundreds of the greatest games imaginable. Going behind the scenes, PlayStation Plus talks to the people behind the games of tomorrow, and goes all over the world in search of the games you'll be shelling out for over the next year...



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